United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.7

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee

7th meeting

Tuesday, 12 October 2004, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): As I am taking the floor for the first time, Sir, permit me to associate my delegation with the warm sentiments expressed by others regarding your election as Chairman of this Committee. I am confident that, under your guidance, the work of the Committee will proceed smoothly to a successful conclusion. Naturally, our congratulations are also extended to other members of the Bureau as well, who will be assisting you in your delicate and challenging work. You can rest assured of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the task ahead.

The euphoria that greeted the end of the cold war with regard to disarmament has long waned. Despite the collective efforts that have been made towards disarmament and non-proliferation, this global village is as unsafe as it was decades ago, if not worse. The old threat has been exacerbated by the alarming rise of new challenges. That has placed an unparalleled responsibility on the community of nations to rededicate itself to the quest for comprehensive global security. We therefore urge member States to eschew parochial interests in order to attain an amicable and constructive consensus. After all, no country or region is insulated from the dire security challenges of the twenty-first century.

In the face of such threats and challenges, we cannot but be concerned at the gradual gravitation towards unilateralism in disarmament and continue to hold the principled position that multilaterally concluded solutions are the only means of achieving a comprehensive and sustainable agreement.

In that context, my delegation is concerned about the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to reach an accord on its programme of work. That is an indictment of our collective responsibility and could undermine the Conference's position as the sole multilateral forum in the field of disarmament. The importance of the Disarmament Commission has been lucidly and eloquently stated over the years; I cannot but re-echo that position. The difficulties confronting the Commission are also indicative of growing uncertainties about the whole disarmament agenda of the post-cold-war era. Unless concrete efforts are made to address the stalemate, the Disarmament Commission could be plunged into an irredeemable abyss. The attainment of a consensus, on the other hand, would rekindle confidence in the work of the Commission for the efficient execution of its mandated functions as a universal deliberative body of the General Assembly.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and, in juxtaposition with disarmament, constitutes an indispensable element in the pursuit of global security. However, that objective can be realized only if the Treaty attains universality and if all States parties without exception avoid

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selectivity and faithfully comply with and implement its provisions. The discriminatory proposition that some countries can be entrusted with nuclear weapons while others cannot is difficult to defend. We would be undermining both the spirit and letter of the NPT if non-nuclear States were to continue to abide by the non-proliferation regime while some States remained free to acquire nuclear weapons and others further improved on their destructive capability and continued to display them as an enviable source of power and respectability in international politics. The disparate positions on fundamental issues at the third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee were regrettable and we encourage member States to relentlessly strive to overcome the issues of contention, since the outcome of the Review Conference will have an enormous impact on the global nuclear-weapons regime.

Ghana regards the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as crucial to efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and, by extension, nuclear disarmament. Thus, we are disheartened by the abeyance of the Treaty and entreat States, particularly the 11 whose ratification is paramount for the Treaty to enter into force, to ratify it sooner rather than later. While awaiting the realization of that ultimate goal, Ghana urges nuclear-weapon States to maintain the current moratorium on nuclear testing.

My delegation shares the concerns of most member States regarding the threat of the acquisition by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction. It is on that premise that we view with great concern reports of opposition to the inclusion of provisions on inspection and verification in the fissile material cut-off treaty. In our view, any treaty devoid of credible verification and inspection provisions will not attain the goal of denying terrorist groups the acquisition of plutonium and enriched uranium.

It is the considered view of Ghana that nuclear-weapon-free zones are critical components of the cause of non-proliferation and global nuclear disarmament. Our efforts will, however, be to no avail without the support of the nuclear-weapon States, which are required to respect the underlying objectives of those agreements and to abide by their provisions.

It is deserving, and rightly so, that weapons of mass destruction remain the main focus of attention. However, we should not be oblivious to the havoc being wreaked in diverse areas of conflict worldwide through the use of conventional weapons. The eradication of anti-personnel mines in Africa has been unequivocally strengthened by the recent adoption of a common position by our foreign ministers for the forthcoming Nairobi summit. We hope that the necessary resources will be made available for that collective aspiration to attain fruition.

With the general malaise in the disarmament process, it is imperative that this Committee be revitalized to enable it efficiently to execute its responsibility. We support the reform process, but we are of the view that it should focus primarily on creating the requisite environment to enable the Committee to pursue its cardinal responsibility in the field of disarmament. Undoubtedly, the challenges are daunting, but surmountable.

It is my fervent hope that the monumental achievements in science and technology will be utilized for the common benefit of humankind and not to aggravate fears of an Armageddon. It behoves our Organization, and indeed this Committee, to achieve that laudable aspiration. We cannot and should not betray the trust reposed in us.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I am especially pleased to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We assure you and the members of the Bureau of our support and full cooperation as you undertake your work.

The new international context that has been established in recent years has highlighted the importance of the role of the United Nations in disarmament and international security. Today, we are more than ever aware of the need to strengthen the role of international law and States' respect for disarmament and non-proliferation accords and treaties.

Tunisia has always believed that the arms race is often pursued to the detriment of the most basic needs of civilian populations and their development. My country has always acted on the basis of that conviction. We feel that multilateralism is the fundamental principle that should guide negotiations in disarmament and non-proliferation. In that context, Tunisia supports all international and regional efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. We call for the adoption of measures to eliminate nuclear weapons and to strengthen international security, since any attempt to remove the multilateral element from nuclear disarmament would undermine the binding legal instruments and political commitments already adopted.

With that in mind, and aware of its obligations, on 23 September 2004 Tunisia deposited its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Moreover, in 2004 Tunisia organized a workshop for the countries of North Africa, in cooperation with the Preparatory Commission for CTBT.

Difficulties continue to hamper the disarmament process: the CTBT is still not in force; the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention has not been adopted; and the Conference on Disarmament — the sole body for multilateral negotiation on disarmament — has continued for several years to experience difficulties in establishing a programme of work. Another indicator of the state in which international community finds itself in this area is the failure of Member States to reach a consensus on the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. In addition, the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference for NPT has been unable to agree on an agenda, thus preventing the Conference President from beginning consultations on the schedule.

In the face of the current situation, and while awaiting the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon States have the right to ask for effective guarantees against the use or threat of use of such weapons against the security and integrity of their countries, which have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons.

The Middle East is perhaps one of the most tension-filled areas, owing to the refusal of Israel, a non-declared nuclear-weapon State, to join the NPT and to place all its nuclear installations under the comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency nuclear safeguards regime unconditionally, despite the numerous appeals made by the other countries of the region, as well as by the General Assembly in its many resolutions on that issue. Israel's obstinacy is an obstacle to disarmament in general, and to the establishment of lasting peace in the region in particular, and is reflected in the policy of excessive militarization being pursued by Israel — a country that also possesses other particularly deadly weapons. Faced with that threat, it is not reasonable today to approach a situation such as this — in such a sensitive region — on the basis of double standards. In that regard, we call upon the international community, especially the Powers with the ability to be influential, to take credible measures to oblige Israel to meet its international obligations.

Aware of the full importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of its beneficial effect for international peace and stability and for civilian populations throughout the world, Tunisia quickly ratified the Convention and has completed the destruction of all its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, which testifies to its commitment to eliminate that category of inhuman weapons.

In another arena, the adoption in July 2001 of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was an important step forward in multilateral disarmament. In that connection, Tunisia, in cooperation with the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, organized a workshop for States of the Arab Maghreb — held on 14 and 15 June 2004 in Tunis — on the presentation of the reports to be submitted in accordance with the Programme of Action.

Tunisia is playing an active role in the promotion of peace and security within the various political arenas with which we are affiliated, in particular in the Arab Maghreb Union and in the Middle East. In Africa, Tunisia has contributed and continues to contribute to the restoration and consolidation of peace and security through its participation in peacekeeping operations. My country is also working consistently towards the success of the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative, as a contribution to cooperation and solidarity between the two shares of the Mediterranean. That approach is helping to strengthen the Mediterranean partnership to address the security and economic challenges the region faces.

My country will continue to play its role in promoting the cause of peace and disarmament.

Mr. Kau (Fiji): Mr. Chairman, I join others in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau of the First Committee on your election and extend my delegation's wishes for a fruitful and successful session under your able leadership. You can be assured of our full cooperation and support.

We now find ourselves in a new and complex security environment brought about by the emergence of new threats, weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism. While the world and the international community are deeply concerned, and while the public cries out, no immediate solution seems to be in sight. Consolation, however, can be found in the increasing international recognition of and support for the broad objectives of disarmament: the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of conventional weapons.

As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, the importance of maintaining the credibility and integrity of the United Nations as the most effective multilateral venue for addressing issues of security and international peace is crucial. However, and sad to say, less progress has been achieved of late within the United Nations machinery and within the international peace and security framework. Member States continue to be divided on crucial disarmament and security issues, and cooperation has been hard to achieve. In that regard, Fiji supports efforts to review and reform the working methods of the First Committee within the context of the United Nations reform and revitalization programme, in order, inter alia, to ensure the strengthening of multilateralism and international cooperation in that area. We subscribe to the belief that multilateralism is a core principle in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and that effective progress can be achieved when the legitimate concerns of Member States are carefully considered and addressed and when universal norms are adopted. The continued involvement of the Security Council in addressing those threats is also important.

As a small island developing State and as a strong advocate of international peacekeeping, Fiji is committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and relies on the multilateral forum of this Committee to play a critical role in addressing the current challenges and ensuring further progress in the area. Our efforts, we hope, will assist in the realization of a peaceful and safe nuclear-free world.

As an active member of the Pacific Islands Forum, Fiji has been working energetically on the regional front to ensure a collective regional approach to the issue of disarmament. The Forum has continuously expressed its stand on issues such as weapons control legislation, the shipment of radioactive materials and the establishment of nuclear-free-zones. In the area of weapons control, the region is drafting legislation to ensure public safety by imposing strict controls on the importation, possession and use of firearms, ammunition and related material. The shipment of radioactive material through our region has long been an issue. In that regard, the region has reiterated its concerns about possible economic loss in a non-release situation and is seeking further assurance from the parties concerned. Our region also welcomes the recent assurance by shipping States that they will take all practicable actions to assist in dealing with accidents if they occur in our waters. With respect to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, we continue to call on those that have yet to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty to do so, as a means of enhancing global and regional peace and security and global nuclear non-proliferation.

On small arms and light weapons, Fiji and the region have been steadfast in their resolve to strengthen control over arms transfers and usage. Fiji played host to a United Nations regional small arms and light weapons workshop in Nadi in August 2004. The workshop was sponsored by Australia and Japan with the assistance of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. We hope that many useful lessons were learned at the workshop to assist and guide national plans and strategies.

Leaders of our region continue to remind the international community of the plight of the islands in the region caused by the radioactive contamination resulting from nuclear-weapon testing. We hope that those responsible will live up to their obligations and support efforts to rehabilitate and transform the lives of the peoples affected by their actions on those islands.

Fiji continues to be concerned about the surge in weapons and military expenditures, which inevitably has a great impact on commitments to social and economic development. Health, education, poverty eradication and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will continue to be affected. We believe that disarmament and development must complement each other and that the international community must continue to keep the development agenda at the top of its priorities as a means to ensure the enhancement of international security and long-term stability.

Moreover, we are increasingly aware of the threat of weapons of mass destruction getting into the hands of terrorists. It is critical that Member States and the international community cooperate in efforts to ensure that strict controls are in place to alleviate that threat. In response to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), Pacific island leaders have moved to ensure that all countries in the region have legislative provisions to address terrorism, transnational organized crime, weapons control and transport security. There are also moves to conduct a regional counter-terrorism contingency planning exercise.

We firmly believe that there is sufficient goodwill and cooperation among Member States and within the United Nations to bring about progress in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. While challenges will continue to confront us, effective strategies based on international cooperation and multilateralism will ensure our great success.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to join previous speakers in expressing our heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We wish you every success. We should also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur on their election. We are fully confident that, under your leadership and with the cooperation of the other Bureau members, our work will be crowned with success. In addition, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his efforts concerning disarmament issues and for the statement he made at the first meeting of the First Committee's current session. We wish him every success.

The majority of Committee members hope that we will narrow the differences existing among us and that we will reach agreed solutions on issues related to international peace and security. Since we represent the peoples of the world, we have the humanitarian and moral obligation to reach common formulas and approaches aimed at saving humanity from the death and ruin caused by the use of weapons of mass destruction.

It is truly unfortunate that countries possessing those banned weapons remain determined to keep and even to develop them. It is obvious from their resolve to maintain weapons of mass destruction that those countries — especially the major Powers — want to retain their monopoly on such weapons and to prevent proliferation under the pretext of the destructive danger posed to humanity. That is a strange equation which is difficult to understand and accept. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to see the countries that possess such weapons abandon them voluntarily in order to preserve life on our planet. The possession of weapons of mass destruction is a form of terrorism with which countries flex their muscles and intimidate neighbouring or competing countries, threatening them with destruction. It is the worst thing that human beings have invented for mass self-destruction.

Since we are discussing the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, I should like here to refer to the agenda item before the Committee on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The Middle East has long been an inflamed region because of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine and Syria. That has caused a clear imbalance of power in favour of Israel, which is determined to strengthen its nuclear might and arsenal.

As it did at previous sessions, the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth session called upon all parties in the Middle East to seriously consider urgent practical steps aimed at implementing the proposal to create a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The Assembly called upon all countries of the region that had not yet done so to subject all their nuclear activities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). All of the countries of the region responded to those appeals and joined the relevant agreements except Israel, which remains outside the international framework, unaccountable and exempt from international pressure, which is applied to countries in an explicitly selective and unacceptable manner.

With regard to issues related to weapons of mass destruction and the need to eliminate them, I must note that chemical and biological weapons, small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel landmines and booby traps, and particularly their proliferation, pose a continuing threat to human beings, to their security and to sustainable development in general, especially when control of such weapons cannot be maintained. Therefore, it is important that we focus on the need to implement the relevant conventions and to show no leniency in enforcing implementation. We believe it essential to urge and encourage all countries to join the conventions regulating the possession of such weapons. We also call on countries that manufacture such weapons not to take advantage of the loopholes in those conventions by developing weapons not covered by them.

As a result of Qatar's commitment and adherence to international treaties and conventions, Sheikh Tamim Ben Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, Deputy Emir and heir apparent of the State of Qatar, endorsed on 4 October 2004 a resolution establishing a national committee to ban weapons. The resolution mandates the committee with the following tasks: first, offering advice and consultation to relevant Government bodies on all matters related to the prohibition of weapons of all kinds, including nuclear, biological, toxin, chemical and conventional weapons; second, examining international agreements prohibiting weapons and rendering an opinion as to the appropriateness of joining them; third, working to attain the objectives set out in the relevant international agreements signed or ratified by the country banning weapons of all kinds; fourth, proposing legislation and measures needed to implement the relevant international treaties; fifth, reviewing national legislation on weapons and weapons trafficking and proposing means to develop and amend such legislation; sixth, preparing and submitting to international organizations reports on weapons bans, in accordance with the relevant agreements and international resolutions; seventh, preparing and implementing programmes needed to raise awareness of the provisions of international treaties banning weapons; and eighth, participating in delegations representing the State in conferences and on committees related to disarmament.

I would also like to recall that Qatar has ratified the 1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, and has joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Governments and States need to employ the concept of confidence-building to stop the arms race and the development of new weapons. Moreover, mistrust and fear of others is what makes countries compete in possessing the most modern and deadliest weapons. My delegation believes that the best way to control and stop the arms race is to seek a solution to the difficult political problems of this world and to persuade warring parties to resort to dialogue and resolve their problems politically as soon as possible before situations deteriorate.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): The end of the cold war during the closing years of last century generated widespread hope for peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, such hope for a peace dividend was short-lived. The twenty-first century dawned as the last century did, with a world beset by conflict and destruction among and within States. What is different today is that globalization has made every conflict and every catastrophe international in its impact and implications. There is no coherent global policy to regulate armaments, arrest proliferation and promote disarmament.

Today, threats to peace and challenges to arms control and disarmament arise from several sources. International terrorism and the possibility of the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by terrorists constitute a threat to all States, including the most powerful. This resort to the asymmetric instrument of terrorism is, at least in part, a consequence of growing asymmetry in power and the inability of the international system to eliminate political injustice and the unjust oppression of peoples in many parts of the world, especially in the Islamic world. While the international campaign against terrorism has been effective and cooperation to combat terrorism is growing, we have yet to initiate a comprehensive strategy to address and eliminate its root causes.

Pakistan agrees that all efforts must be made to prevent terrorists and other non-State actors from acquiring and using WMDs. In our view, the conclusion of a non-discriminatory and universal treaty would be the most effective instrument to counter that threat. We agreed to the adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) by the Security Council as an interim measure to foster national action by Member States to prevent the acquisition of WMD capability by non-State actors, particularly terrorists.

We in Pakistan have adopted comprehensive measures to prevent WMD proliferation. We have taken effective steps, in cooperation with the international community, to eliminate an underground proliferation network that had tentacles in two dozen countries. We are cooperating closely with the

International Atomic Energy Agency in that endeavour, and urge other countries to do likewise.

Pakistan has adopted wide-ranging measures to ensure foolproof security for its nuclear and strategic assets. Four years ago, we established a Nuclear Command and Control Authority, which is responsible for our strategic assets — assets that are vital for our strategic deterrence posture. We have also created a Nuclear Regulatory Authority for the safe operation of civilian nuclear plants. We have elaborated legislation to implement our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Last month, our Parliament promulgated a comprehensive export control act to deal with nuclear and biological weapons and their material, goods, technologies, equipment and means of delivery. Salient elements of our new law include: prohibiting the diversion of controlled goods and technologies, including re-export, transshipment and transit; licensing and record-keeping; export control lists; and penal provisions of up to 14 years imprisonment and a fine of 5 million rupees. We are confident that there will be no proliferation of WMDs from Pakistan.

While the threat of WMD terrorism creates fear and foreboding, people are suffering and dying every day as a result of small wars conducted mainly with small arms. A host of complex crises in Africa and other parts of the developing world are threatening national and international security, creating major humanitarian emergencies and neutralizing economic progress. A host of measures have been initiated to address those crises, including the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. These crises need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner through conflict resolution, ending external intervention and halting the illegal exploitation of natural resources that motivates and fuels many of these conflicts.

There are other regional situations that portend even greater danger. In the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli confrontation is aggravated by the threat of proliferation and use of WMDs. Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and cooperative framework. No one can ignore that nuclear weapons and their means of delivery already exist in the region. We trust that the current controversy relating to the nuclear programme of a country in the region will be addressed in a cooperative framework. We support the fulfilment of international obligations by all States. We also support the objective of creating a zone free of WMDs in the Middle East.

It is essential to prevent the emergence of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and avoid an extended arms race with grave portents for peace and stability in North-East Asia. We support the six-party talks initiated and hosted by China. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure the success of the talks with the objective of ensuring a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons and addressing the security concerns and economic aspirations of all the States concerned.

In South Asia, the security environment has visibly improved in recent months with the initiation of a composite dialogue between India and Pakistan. We believe that durable peace and security in South Asia will require an earnest effort to resolve outstanding disputes, particularly on Jammu and Kashmir, promote mutual nuclear restraint and maintain a balance of conventional forces between Pakistan and India.

Peace and security is an important item on the agenda of the composite dialogue. Both countries are committed to working for strategic stability. They have declared that their nuclear capability is a factor for stability in South Asia. They are committed to taking the measures necessary to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. We have agreed on a number of nuclear confidence-building measures, including the improvement of hotlines, prior notification of missile flight tests and the reaffirmation of our unilateral test moratoriums. Further confidence-building measures are to be discussed.

Pakistan believes that several other, more ambitious, measures for mutual nuclear and missile restraint can be agreed, including the following: maintenance of nuclear weapons on de-alert status; no operational deployment of nuclear ballistic missiles; no acquisition or deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems; and avoidance of a nuclear and missile arms race.

The crisis of the nuclear non-proliferation regime arises not only from the apparent intention of some States to acquire nuclear weapons, but, even more, from the tension between nuclear legality and nuclear reality. This tension is apparent in three major areas.

First, the five nuclear-weapon States have undertaken a legal commitment, under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to achieve nuclear disarmament. Some progress has been made towards reducing strategic arsenals, but over 20,000 nuclear weapons are still held, mostly on high alert, by the two largest nuclear-weapon States. Moreover, it seems clear that the nuclear Powers intend to retain their nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future. A credible programme for nuclear disarmament, within a reasonable time frame, is indispensable to reviving the essential bargain which is at the heart of the NPT. Any regime which seeks to perpetuate discrimination and ignores the vital security interests of the majority of States cannot be sustained indefinitely.

Secondly, the NPT recognizes only five nuclear-weapon States. In reality, there are three other States which posses nuclear weapons. Those three States are also unlikely to give up their nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future outside the framework of a programme of global nuclear disarmament or regional arms control and conflict resolution. In their joint statement in June, Pakistan and India declared that their nuclear capabilities are essential for regional stability. Endeavours to insist on their adherence to the NPT as non-nuclear States are unrealistic. Attempts to persuade them through penal measures or technology denial are likely to be fruitless and could damage the prospects of creating a credible global non-proliferation regime. Unless the cooperation of the three nuclear-weapon States that remain outside the NPT is evoked through mutual agreement, there will remain a gaping hole in the NPT regime. We note with interest that the IAEA Director General recently called for the inclusion of the three non-NPT nuclear States in future talks on non-proliferation and disarmament.

Thirdly, the NPT bargain essentially involved the acceptance by the non-nuclear parties of the temporary retention of nuclear weapons by five nuclear-weapon States in exchange for the promise of nuclear disarmament and of full cooperation in the development and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Since the nature of such peaceful nuclear cooperation was not elaborated in the NPT, many of the advanced non-nuclear parties have developed or acquired the complete nuclear fuel cycle, including the enrichment and reprocessing technologies that create the capability for nuclear-weapons development.

The international community is now belatedly concerned about the spread of those sensitive parts of the nuclear fuel cycle to other States, even under international safeguards. It is clear that such double discrimination is difficult to justify. An equitable solution must be found through political and technological means, not by coercion or the use of force. We believe that the experts group convened by the IAEA Director General should evolve practical solutions to ensuring the safety of the nuclear fuel cycle. Meanwhile, political steps, including security assurances, may offer the means to regulate the sensitive parts of the nuclear cycle in civilian nuclear programmes. We suggest the convening of an international conference to address and remove the current tensions between nuclear legality and nuclear reality in the three areas I have outlined.

There are several other worrying aspects on the global proliferation and disarmament scene. First is the absence of international agreement on missiles. Unfortunately, the Hague Code of Conduct does not address the concerns of several militarily significant States. Secondly, there are the dangers which may arise from "war fighting" nuclear doctrines and reports regarding the further qualitative development of "useable" nuclear weapons. Thirdly, there is the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems. Fourthly, there is the steady militarization of outer space.

It is obvious that those global challenges to stability, disarmament and non-proliferation can be addressed only in multilateral negotiations. The complex of disarmament and non-proliferation threats in the regional and global contexts has never been greater. There is no substitute for multilateral legal norms that enjoy universal legality or acceptance, even if the negotiation of international treaties with effective verification provisions is often time consuming and complex. Freely negotiated international treaties are the necessary sheet anchor for effective arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Decisions promulgated in exclusive and limited bodies representing the views, interests and perspectives of the few and the powerful do not enjoy universal commitment and are thus lacking in the legitimacy that can be offered only by international treaties.

Therefore, it is now imperative to revive the Conference on Disarmament and to restore its role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. The impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is artificial, in our judgement. We are unable to decipher the reluctance of some to simultaneously address the issues of proliferation and disarmament. The work programme of the Conference must include the negotiation of a fissile material treaty, encompassing existing stockpiles and an effective verification mechanism. It must also include measures to prevent the militarization of outer space and the negotiation of a realistic programme of nuclear disarmament. Moreover, until nuclear disarmament is achieved, security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States can provide a most effective tool to reduce the incentives for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The desire to address comprehensively the major threats to international security and disarmament within the Conference on Disarmament cannot be dismissed as linkages. On the contrary, it is only such a comprehensive and global approach to disarmament and non-proliferation that can elicit the support of the international community.

We support efforts to improve the effectiveness of the working methods of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the First Committee. Such efforts must involve, first and foremost, the revival of the Conference on Disarmament to play its assigned role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum. It must also involve the full utilization of the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee for discussion of major disarmament and non-proliferation problems. Those deliberative bodies can serve to develop the basis for the negotiation of international agreements on various outstanding and emerging threats of proliferation and challenges to genuine disarmament. They must not be marginalized.

Finally, as regards the First Committee, we believe that its reform efforts must be pursued within the following parameters. First, the political role of the First Committee must be enhanced. Secondly, the approach should be incremental and build upon progressive steps. Thirdly, there should be better and more efficient time management. Fourthly, all decisions must be reached by consensus.

However, truncated change is likely to introduce distortions in the functioning of the Assembly. Efforts to improve the functioning of the First Committee should not be divorced from the measures under consideration for the revitalization of the General Assembly and its other Committees.

Mr. Jha (Nepal): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the Committee. I also take this opportunity to extend our warm felicitations to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation commends the work that the outgoing Chairman accomplished at the last session of the Committee.

I would also like to place on record my sincere appreciation for the thoughtful remarks made earlier in the session by Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, on the persisting problems in the field of disarmament and international security.

Our common objective to find durable peace is predicated on eliminating weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, as well as on ensuring that credible and sufficient curbs are placed on small arms and light weapons. Durable peace requires the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles; the effective control of small arms and light weapons; and the promotion of a culture of peace.

The international community's efforts to advance the cause of disarmament, however, have never gone without a hitch. While some progress has been registered with respect to disarmament in the area of chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons remain a persistent and devastating threat to human civilization. Controls over small arms and light weapon remain inadequate.

Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to human civilization — even to the existence of humanity on this planet. The complete removal of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth in a time-bound manner must therefore be the foremost priority on the disarmament agenda. In this context, Nepal stresses the need to implement the 13 practical steps contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is now extremely urgent. Genuine compliance with article VI of the NPT by the nuclear-weapon States, in particular, is a sine qua non for durable peace.

There is no doubt that disarmament and non-proliferation need to go hand in hand. No non-nuclear-weapon State should engage in the proliferation of deadly nuclear arms. At the same time, nuclear-weapon States must also prove to the world that they are committed to nuclear disarmament, which will persuade non-nuclear-weapon States to abandon their nuclear ambitions.

It is disheartening that there is no encouraging progress on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty or the fissile material cut-off treaty. We fervently hope that substantive work on a fissile material cut-off treaty will start without further delay.

Nepal believes that countries should be able to engage in the peaceful use of nuclear technology under non-discriminatory safeguards. It is equally important that such countries comply with the applicable International Atomic Energy Agency verification measures.

As an ardent believer in peace, Nepal supports nuclear-weapon-free zones. We also stress the necessity of keep outer space free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Although much progress has been made in controlling biological and chemical weapons, we are still far from achieving the complete disarmament of arsenals of such weapons. We must work relentlessly to strengthen the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention with comprehensive, reliable and robust verification measures. Efforts should be constantly exerted to ensure that no country derogates from the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In this time of worldwide terrorism, it is absolutely vital that the world community join forces to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands. The threat of terrorists gaining access to such deadly weapons and using them is no longer hypothetical.

Missile proliferation has become a major cause of concern for the international community and needs to be controlled in an effective manner. Nepal encourages the Panel of Governmental Experts to make extra efforts in order to reach consensus on a final report when it next meets.

The prevailing situation underscores the urgency of preventing the weaponization of, and an arms race in, outer space. It is equally important that the seabed and Antarctica remain free from all weapons.

It is disconcerting that, over the past few years, the multilateral disarmament mechanisms have been experiencing a crisis. There is a stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. There has been a serious erosion of the commitments of the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their deadly arsenals.

To our dismay, even progress on the much-hyped bilateral tracks appears to have stalled. Strategic treaties have been ditched. New doctrines have been introduced to stage a nuclear comeback — a phenomenon which is certain to trigger an arms race anew.

Little progress has been made within the framework of the agreed arrangements in reducing the huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons or the capacity for destruction.

Undoubtedly, the overall picture of disarmament efforts is bleak. Yet we see a glimmer of hope in the domain of small arms and light weapons due to the almost unanimous commitment of the global community to implement the Programme of Action with a view to curbing such arsenals. The ongoing negotiation for an international instrument on identifying and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons is a welcome initiative. However, there is a need to engage in extensive consultations with the wider membership regarding the nature of that instrument.

Nepal has been suffering from the destabilizing effects of small arms and light weapons. The so-called Maoists have been using such arms to brutalize and kill innocent people, as well as to destroy private property and public infrastructure. We are taking a number of concrete actions in the implementation of the Programme of Action, including by amending and strictly enforcing our domestic laws and regulations.

Our national report on implementation is under active preparation. Nepal is of the view that transparency in the area of armaments is crucial to confidence-building among States. In that respect, measures of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be further expanded, while ensuring an equal degree of rights and obligations for all States. Similarly, we encourage the panel of

Government experts to maintain full transparency in order to attain its objectives.

We are concerned about the increasing proliferation of anti-personnel landmines; their indiscriminate use in conflict zones is causing serious human casualties. As this problem is related to humanitarian concerns and the legitimate security concerns of sovereign States, a proper balance between the two would be in order.

I wish to reiterate Nepal's full commitment to host in Kathmandu the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. We also urge that the Kathmandu process be revived as a logical step towards the early relocation of that Centre to Kathmandu.

In concluding, we fully agree that there is a need for initiating reforms in various United Nations organs, including the First Committee. Such reforms, however, should be integral to the comprehensive revitalization of the General Assembly and lead to the overall strengthening of the system, not to tilting or weakening it. We look forward to a constructive engagement in this exercise.

Mr. Pak Gil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am fully confident that your wisdom and diplomatic skills will guide our deliberations to a fruitful outcome.

The aspirations and desire of humankind for a new, just and peaceful century are still thwarted by grave challenges. Unilateralism, based on the supremacy of power, ruthlessly destroys the norms and order of international relations.

What cannot be overlooked, moreover, is that weapons of mass destruction — including nuclear weapons levelled at sovereign States — are deployed throughout the world, and that the theory of preemptive nuclear strikes is now being put into action with lightning acceleration in development of new types of nuclear weapons.

Thirty-six years ago, the nuclear-weapon States committed themselves to abolishing their nuclear weapons, while emphasizing nuclear non-proliferation. That commitment has enabled the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be maintained so far.

However, the nuclear super-Power, far from abolishing nuclear weapons, has been developing new types of nuclear weapons and even expanding the nuclear arms race into outer space. The advent of new types of space weapons, such as satellite radar weapons in pursuit of a national missile defence system, is casting dark clouds threatening a nuclear arms race and raising the possibility of a space war.

In essence the nuclear super-Power has abused the NPT in order to achieve its absolute security by threatening and blackmailing non-nuclear-weapons, States with nuclear weapons at the cost of their security. It cannot be acceptable to anyone that a country advocates nuclear non-proliferation while it accumulates nuclear weapons in one corner of the globe and seeks their qualitative improvement.

In order to achieve substantial disarmament and ensure lasting peace on Earth, the international community should set primary tasks to achieve the solution of the issue, based on precise analysis.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the view that the core issue of disarmament is nuclear disarmament and that the fundamental task in achieving nuclear disarmament is the real abandonment by the nuclear super-Power of its policy of nuclear threats.

At present, the main cause of the destruction of international peace and security that also has a serious impact on the disarmament process is none other than the nuclear super-Power's policy of nuclear threats, based on highhandedness and unilateralism. Countries are designated as comprising an "axis of evil" and are thus targets for preemptive nuclear strikes, while unilateral military attacks against sovereign States are perpetrated under the pretext of suspicion over the possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Such a designation is nothing but an artificial pretext to realize the policy of nuclear threat by a nuclear super-Power aimed at controlling the world by maintaining nuclear supremacy and nuclear threats. The developments in Iraq proved this.

The substantial and grave threat of weapons of mass destruction that is endangering international peace and security comes from none other than the nuclear super-Power which possesses the largest nuclear arsenal and is the largest exporter of arms.

If the international community attaches importance to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and does not want the existing international agreements on disarmament to be nullified or weakened, it should address the policy of nuclear threats by the nuclear super-Power and take realistic measures to eliminate it. Pursuing the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction while turning a blind eye to the essence of the issue constitutes an escape from reality and an evasion of responsibility.

It is the consistent position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to oppose the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. If such proliferation is to be prevented, it is necessary, first of all, to prohibit the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, around the world and to eliminate such nuclear threats as the doctrine of preemptive use. Furthermore nuclear non-proliferation requires a halt to the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and achieving the complete dismantling of nuclear weapons. Only when nuclear disarmament and the abolishment of nuclear weapons is realized can the objective of disarmament be said to have been attained. Nuclear disarmament should therefore be the primary goal, in order to ensure the complete elimination of the use of nuclear weapons, their total abolishment and the provision of unconditional nuclear negative assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

It would be inappropriate to speak of disarmament as long as there are nuclear weapons on this planet, the nuclear arms race continues and the efforts of the United Nations to set up a collective security system are not able to bring about the desired results. If there is connivance in or tolerance of the brigandish doctrine that only big countries can have nuclear weapons and use them to attack or threaten small countries, there will be no essential change in the international order.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, which is the current focus of international attention, is the outcome of the United States policy on nuclear threats, which is based on its deep-rooted hostile policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has persisted for more than half a century. If the United States had not listed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the "axis of evil", and named it as a target for nuclear pre-emptive strikes, thus aggravating the situation, the question of our nuclear deterrence would not have arisen.

The consistent position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is to adhere to the objective of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully, through dialogue and negotiations. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, proceeding from its sincere desire to contribute to peace and security on the Korean peninsula, in North-East Asia and in the rest of the world, recently advanced flexible proposals to break through the current deadlock in the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States and achieve realistic results.

Our proposal of the "reward for freeze" approach, the first phase of action in the package solution based on the principle of simultaneous action, is the only way to settle the nuclear issue on a step-by-step basis, as it fully reflects the reality of the lack of confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

If the United States commits itself to dropping its hostile policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and takes direct measures to "reward for freeze", on the principle of "word to word" and "action to action", the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula will be resolved smoothly. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will do its utmost to remove external threats and ensure a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula in the future as well.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I wish to join previous speakers, Sir, in sincerely congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee as well as in congratulating the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in ensuring the success of your mandate.

We are here, once again, at this annual session, to assess the actions carried out in the pursuit of our common goals and to harmonize our views on ways and means to give new impetus to international cooperation in the fields of disarmament and international security. At this stage of our journey, we have good reason to ask ourselves questions. During the past year, have we achieved decisive progress in building a safer world? Have we become more aware of the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), which are jeopardizing the existence of humankind as a whole? Have we come back to this forum more determined to prevent their proliferation and to totally eliminate them once and for all? It is difficult for my delegation to give a positive response to those questions when we observe the continued deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, the development of new generations of weapons, the increased threat of terrorism and the worrisome increase in military expenditures, which, in the last two years, have reached almost $1 trillion.

Despite those striking facts, my country still wants to believe that the international community will be able to break out of this deadlock and avoid the failure of its peace initiatives. In this respect, we are convinced that an analysis of the various disarmament issues must entail the continuous adaptation of multilateral disarmament mechanisms to take into account the international environment and existing strategies.

The role of the multilateral disarmament institutions is more important than ever. We need to ensure that those institutions respect strict norms guaranteeing the legitimacy and effectiveness of their actions. Above all, we need to avoid assuming commitments that we will not fulfil or making statements of no practical relevance. In other words, we need universal accession to multilateral treaties and their full implementation through the adoption of strong safeguards in the nuclear realm. These treaties need to be supported through effective verification mechanisms.

Here, we appeal to all States to take action to build the political will to overcome the obstacles that are preventing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We need, moreover, to make a greater effort to eliminate the threat of biological weapons, and, more generally speaking, to effectively eradicate stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, including fissile materials. That is the surest way of preventing such weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists.

Since the end of the Second World War, the international community has focused its attention on nuclear weapons. However, small conventional weapons continue to claim tens of millions of victims throughout the world. The proliferation and illicit trafficking of these arms is a phenomenon that affects the African continent, and West Africa in particular. It destabilizes States, spreads terror among peoples and prevents all economic and social growth. My delegation emphasizes that, in order to effectively fight this awful scourge, it is vital to promote, both on the regional as well as international levels, dynamic cooperation and to guarantee the effective implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In the context of the Programme of Action, the West African initiative — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium — is a valuable experience which should be further supported with a view to its transformation into a regional convention. This is an ideal opportunity for my delegation to thank and encourage the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. To allow the Group to better deal with the resolution of this delicate issue, it is up to States to adopt policies that improve and strengthen controls on the circulation of small arms and light weapons.

When it comes to the question of anti-personnel landmines in Africa, the efforts aimed at eradicating that danger are hampered by a lack of technical assistance and a lack of resources made available to the States affected. In that context, my delegation reiterates the appeal made at the Conference of African Experts on Landmines, held in September 2004, requesting the international community to contribute the necessary financial resources and technical assistance to the States concerned in order to enable them to carry out their national demining programmes.

My delegation attaches great importance to the question of enhancing the effectiveness of the First Committee's working methods. We encourage consultations and the search for consensus on this issue, and we view favourably all reform that does not undermine the right of Member States to promote and defend their legitimate interests. In that context, we view positively, among other recommended measures, the institutionalization of interactive debates during which the Committee would benefit from the contributions of academic specialists and members of non-governmental organizations involved in disarmament issues.

We also endorse of the proposal to cluster similar agenda items, and we support the proposal to establish a mechanism for effectively following up on implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted. Such a mechanism, if operational and effective, would contribute to strengthening the authority and credibility of the First Committee.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Paraguay, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and to say how happy we are to see you in our midst once again. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Paraguay fully associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group on the first day of the First Committee's general debate. The delegation of Paraguay wishes to take this opportunity to add a few reflections on issues related to international security.

My delegation reaffirms that it believes multilateralism is the necessary and most suitable instrument for maintaining international peace and security: only through the collective efforts of all Member States can we ensure our mutual security. Paraguay supports the universal and regional instruments for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, underlines the efforts of the United Nations to ensure compliance with those instruments and supports the action of multilateral institutions responsible for verifying and maintaining compliance with those treaties.

Weapons of mass destruction have rightly become the focus of our attention. In that context, Paraguay fully shares the concern of other Member States that such weapons might spread and that they risk falling into the hands of non-State actors, with potentially disastrous consequences for humanity. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) would complement ongoing efforts to strengthen existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Paraguay believes that it is of the greatest importance to have the necessary cooperation, wherever required, for the effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). It also believes that disarmament and non-proliferation cannot be addressed separately and that the two issues should be dealt with in the appropriate sphere of competence. We agree with the statement of the Secretary-General contained in his report on the work of the Organization with respect to the Conference on Disarmament:

> "Further progress is needed to ensure that the Conference will be able to resume its role of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements, with an emphasis on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The demonstrated ability of the Conference to devise disarmament treaties should be used to the fullest extent." (*A/59/1, para. 68*)

Paraguay is also concerned at the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and believes that responsibility for the fight against that scourge should be shared by all, both the manufacturing countries and the countries where the arms are sold. Paraguay is aware that the excessive accumulation of illicit small arms and light weapons, their uncontrolled proliferation and their wrongful use pose a grave threat to peace and stability in many regions of the world and entail humanitarian consequences at the national, regional and international levels. Paraguay supports the multilateral negotiations undertaken by the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and believes that an international instrument is essential to assist States in tackling the problem of the illicit arms trade.

In conclusion, the delegation of Paraguay underlines that, with the support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, Paraguay is implementing the measures set out in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That collaboration has resulted in the destruction of firearms and ammunition in my country and the holding of training courses to prepare officials to combat that scourge.

Mr. Ngoh Ngoh (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Cameroon joins other countries in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, which is a tribute to your great diplomatic skills and experience, as well as recognition of the highly appreciated contribution of your country, Mexico, to the consideration of disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Rest assured, Sir, of the full support of the delegation of Cameroon in the exercise of your functions.

Although arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are among the international community's greatest concerns, progress towards general and complete disarmament has been very slow. The survival of humankind continues to be threatened by the existence of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological. Those weapons are now coveted by terrorists and other, no less dangerous, actors.

The multilateral treaties prohibiting weapons of mass destruction most certainly give us a normative framework for disarmament and non-proliferation that should enable us, with determination, to make significant progress towards the total elimination of those weapons. Because it is a concern of all, it is in the interest of all countries for those obligations to be scrupulously respected.

But, although we have seen a worrisome regression in the implementation of those treaties in recent years, we must be vigilant in preserving the valuable achievements that have been made and, through appropriate and acceptable means, must close the legal loopholes in those instruments by extending their scope of application and by establishing effective verification and enforcement regimes.

We also need to continue promoting universality of accession to those collective disarmament instruments. Cameroon continues to believe that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are closely bound up together. Retaining nuclear arsenals and keeping nuclear weapons at the centre of security and defence strategies and doctrines do not protect any of the countries which possess such weapons from the old and new threats facing this world today.

We believe that the time has come for the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We urge States not yet parties to the NPT to accede to it, and we urge those countries on whose signatures the CTBT's entry into force depends to sign and ratify it. Non-nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the NPT should be given security assurances to protect them from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Their right to have access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes should also be assured.

All over the world, and particularly in Africa, small arms and light weapons continue daily to kill thousands of civilians — most of them women and children. It is disturbing that the number of victims and the magnitude of losses caused by those arms continue to grow year by year. Also disturbing is the illicit trade in and proliferation of such arms, which criminal groups very often recycle from one arena of conflict to another or introduce into countries at peace, contributing to the spread of insecurity and the destabilization of entire regions. That is why Cameroon is particularly attentive to all disarmament efforts in Central Africa: we see the proliferation of, and the illicit trade in, small arms and light weapons in the subregion as a threat to its stability and security.

After the fruitful exchange of views that we had in the latest session of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, we look forward to studying the initial outline of an international instrument on the tracing of small arms and light weapons. The international community must promptly create a comprehensive and effective instrument in that regard. Cameroon supports all the consultation efforts under way with a view to taking new steps to strengthen international cooperation in order to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that regard, we are in favour of setting up a group of governmental experts as early as possible to consider that issue, which of course also dovetails with the question of tracing small arms and light weapons.

The first Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on landmines, to be held next month in Nairobi, will be an opportunity for a solemn renewal of our commitment to a world free of landmines, to review the achievements made and to assess what still needs to be done to implement the convention and make it universal.

Multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation policies are undoubtedly at a crossroads. There is need for decisive initiatives, particularly with regard to the stalemate in the work of the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. The debates under way on enhancing the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee are going in the right direction and are part of the overall revitalization of the General Assembly. My country will be looking carefully at the various measures proposed and will state its views on them at the appropriate time.

On the regional and subregional levels, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which remains a valuable framework for confidence-building measures and disarmament in Central Africa, more than ever needs our support and our universal commitment to fund its activities in crucial areas such as bolstering the capacities of civil society and setting up the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which, together with the Standing Advisory Committee, has organized a number of workshops on small arms, is having financial difficulties. It is vital that Member States remain committed to Africa by providing those structures with the support necessary for them to accomplish their missions. Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are categorical imperatives if we wish to enable future generations to live in a world free from the scourge of war, as we are exhorted to do by the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Al-Malki (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your skill and expertise, along with the cooperation of the other members of the Bureau, will enable you to guide our deliberations ably and successfully.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remains a cause of concern for the international community. That is particularly so if we take into account the slow pace of WMD dismantlement. In that connection, my country commends the steps taken by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to end its WMD programmes. We hope that this will encourage States which still seek to possess deadly WMDs to put an end to such programmes.

Even a cursory look at the current trends in world armament reveals that weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, exceed by far what is needed by States for their defence and security deterrence policies. That makes it necessary for us as States Members of the United Nations to intensify our efforts to develop machinery to eliminate that danger and to provide international guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, prohibiting the use of such weapons against them.

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports United Nations efforts aimed at implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. These include cooperation among States in controlling the circulation of illicit weapons within States. We are concerned by the trade in such weapons. We fear that they may fall into the hands of groups that could not care less about the right to life, peace or tranquillity, and that might very well use those weapons to commit their terrorist acts and destabilize numerous States.

We can safely say that illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is almost non-existent in Bahrain. That is because my Government pays special attention to this phenomenon and combats it through the adoption of all necessary measures to limit small-arms proliferation. Among these is Decree 16 of 1976, which prohibits all trade in small arms and light weapons. It forbids the granting of licenses to trade in them under any circumstances and imposes a sentence of life in prison on violators. Here, my country supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The creation of zones free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, has been the main factor fostering regional peace and security. Such zones have eased tensions and conflicts, something which the United Nations is trying to achieve. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bahrain continues to support international efforts to establish zones free of weapons of mass destruction, especially in the Middle East region, where Israel alone possesses nuclear weapons. That increases tension in the region and destabilizes regional peace and security at a time when there is a pressing need for peace and security in order to ensure peaceful coexistence among the States of the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly backs the efforts of the Secretary-General, in the framework of United Nations reform, to revitalize the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, with the intention of enhancing the effectiveness of Assembly resolutions and helping United Nations bodies to discharge their responsibilities and tasks. That requires review of international peace and security issues in the light of the profound changes that have occurred in the concept of collective security.

We hope that improving the work of the First Committee will help us to achieve unity of opinion. We also hope to focus, first and foremost, on how to implement resolutions, not on reducing of nullifying their meaning. Those resolutions are designed to enhance international peace and security in all the regions of the world, including the Middle East.

Here, we would like to stress the need to implement United Nations disarmament resolutions and to implement all relevant agreements and treaties. That will engender a favourable international environment, where world peace and security will prevail. That in turn, will help us, as we embark on the third millennium, to build a humane and civilized society in which the spirit of love, harmony, prosperity, tranquillity and peace will reign.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Sir, let me express my pleasure at seeing you chairing our work.

In the current unipolar world, where it is increasingly necessary to preserve multilateralism in international relations, based upon strict respect for the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, the role of the First Committee continues to be highly relevant. While in this room statements are being made that would assure us that the cold war belongs to the past, in the real world military expenses continue to rise, owing in particular to the staggering growth of the super-Power's military budget. Hegemonism, direct or covert interventionism and insecurity for the weakest countries are becoming increasingly evident, as are attempts to validate the doctrine of the pre-emptive use of force. How could there fail to be advances if only a part of the colossal military expenses were allocated to finding solutions to the problems related to underdevelopment and to reducing the gap between the richest and the poorest countries?

Cuba firmly supports general and complete disarmament under strict international control and particularly supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as the highest priority, and of all weapons of mass destruction — mindful of the dangers for all mankind entailed by the mere existence of this kind of weaponry.

Attempts to increasingly focus the international community's attention on horizontal non-proliferation, to the detriment of nuclear disarmament, are contradictory if we consider that there are still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons endangering the very existence of mankind. The only safe and effective way to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is to eliminate them entirely.

It is evident that some nuclear Powers lack the political will required to achieve the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons forever. The outcome document of the forthcoming seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should contain practical commitments that will clearly reflect the responsibility and the role of the nuclear Powers in the advance towards nuclear disarmament, which should be carried out in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Cuba rejects the selective application of the NPT. Questions related to nuclear disarmament and to the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be considered as less important, while priority is given to horizontal non-proliferation. We cannot continue to postpone the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Cuban Government continues to take concrete steps which reflect its firm commitment to multilateralism and its political will to fulfil all its obligations undertaken as a State party to the NPT and to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. For instance, in November 2003, my country hosted the eighteenth regular session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), an event that concluded successfully with the adoption of a final document entitled the Havana Declaration. Likewise, on 27 May 2004, the Republic of Cuba ratified both the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its corresponding Additional Protocol.

On the issue of conventional weapons, we continue to share the concern at the terrible humanitarian consequences of the unbridled proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

We are not opposed to banning the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines. But at the same time, when are we going to take real steps to prevent certain countries from continuing to develop and use increasingly sophisticated and deadly armaments? Little is said and almost nothing appears in the resolutions we adopt every year about such armaments, which cause so-called collateral damage, a phrase used to try to conceal the plight of innocent victims.

Cuba shares the concern about the risk involved in the link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and we fully support all legitimate international efforts to prevent terrorists from acquiring such weapons and their means of delivery. However, Cuba is profoundly concerned that the Security Council — whose limited composition is well known and some of whose members have the right of veto — continues to assume prerogatives and functions that do not belong to it, particularly in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. For example, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) relates to a topic that should continue to be considered in the framework of the traditional multilateral disarmament machinery, where there is an appropriate forum for the negotiation of a binding legal instrument.

International legal obligations — including those in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation — should not be created for Member States without their full participation and their sovereign acceptance through the signing and ratifying of the relevant multilaterally negotiated treaties and agreements. The only guarantee that weapons of mass destruction will not fall into the hands of terrorists is the prohibition and total elimination of that kind of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons. The issue of proliferation in all its aspects should be resolved by political and diplomatic means within the framework of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Cuba rejects the manipulation or arbitrary interpretation of Council resolution 1540 (2004) by any military Power as a preauthorization of or a justification for the unilateral use of force against particular States on the basis of supposed suspicions of the proliferation of such weapons or of their components. That is particularly worrisome in the context of the accusations made by one of the permanent members of the Security Council against certain countries for supposedly developing programmes of weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we note that high-ranking officials of the United States Government have repeatedly made totally false and unfounded accusations against my country, alleging — without producing any evidence — that Cuba possesses a limited capacity for research and development of biological weapons. We vigorously reject such accusations.

The possibility of terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction cannot be eliminated by taking a selective approach, as promoted by the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which is limited to combating horizontal proliferation and which ignores vertical proliferation and disarmament. The PSI erodes multilateralism because, rather than contributing to international unity on the issue and strengthening the role of the United Nations and international disarmament and arms control treaties, it weakens them. Why is there such an attempt to impose a non-transparent mechanism of such selective composition, which acts outside the scope of the United Nations and those treaties, rather than addressing proliferation concerns on the basis of strict respect for the principles of international law and, above all, utilizing the multilateral legal framework of the treaties and mandates of the relevant international organizations?

By virtue of the PSI, it would even be possible to carry out actions contrary to key provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, such as those referring to the innocent passage of vessels through territorial waters of States and to the jurisdictional regime of the high seas embodied in the Convention. There would be no guarantee that the prerogatives arrogated to themselves by the States participating in the PSI could not be manipulated — particularly by its principal author and promoter — in order to take abusive action against other States' vessels and aircraft for various reasons.

The situation of the multilateral disarmament and arms control machinery is increasingly worrisome. The Conference on Disarmament continues to be paralysed. The Disarmament Commission could not even begin to consider substantive items this year. The First Committee continues to adopt draft resolutions that are often not complied with or implemented, particularly those relating to nuclear disarmament. Remedying that situation requires renewed political support from the international community, particularly from countries that question the priorities established during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Cuba favours improving as much as possible the working methods of all United Nations bodies, including the First Committee, provided that that is not to the detriment of the right of all Member States to promote and defend their legitimate interests and that it does not affect, but rather strengthens, the key role played by the General Assembly within the Organization. One of the most grave problems affecting the work of the General Assembly as a whole, including the First Committee, is the lack of adequate follow-up mechanisms with regard to the implementation of the resolutions and decisions that are adopted.

The main difficulties faced by the First Committee do not stem primarily from the greater or lesser degree of effectiveness of its working methods, but from reasons of a political nature, particularly the lack of political will shown by some States to move forward on issues of key relevance to international peace and security, such as nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chidumo (Mozambique): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over the affairs of the Committee. I am confident that your leadership, experience and wisdom will contribute to the successful outcome of our deliberations. I express similar congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Recent developments in the field of disarmament and international security continue to be a matter of concern to the international community. The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) outlines the challenges ahead and the way forward.

The highest negotiating body in the field of disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament, is yet to overcome the stalemate in which it finds itself, while several issues related to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remain unresolved. These include the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism. The threat of terrorism and the international response to that evil have given rise to new concerns related to the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The fight against terrorism, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, requires broad-based international cooperation. We all agree on the imperative to safeguard these rights and freedoms.

We share the view that, to effectively tackle terrorism, we must address its root causes. Multilateralism and collective action in response to global concerns, within the framework of the United Nations, are fundamental, with a view to creating a climate of mutual trust and confidence.

The arms race, including the nuclear arms race, and non-compliance with relevant United Nations legal instruments have long been a source of concern and a source of insecurity, given the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. In the same vein, vertical and horizontal proliferation, including that of ballistic missiles, continues to be a matter of concern for international peace and stability. We therefore join in calling for the Conference of Disarmament to resume its duty of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements. We call also for the universalization of relevant existing international disarmament instruments, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Conventions on Chemical and on Biological Weapons.

The Secretary-General has also alluded to the fact that violent internal conflicts continue to engulf millions of citizens around the world, drawing in neighbouring countries and thus posing an ever wider threat to international peace and security. Armed conflicts lead not only to increased military spending, but also to the widespread and uncontrolled availability of arms in the countries concerned. In addition, armed conflicts increase the availability of small arms and light weapons, which have a great potential to fuel criminal activities and the destabilization of countries.

Moreover, anti-personnel landmines, widely used during armed conflict, in addition to their lethal effects in killing and maiming innocent civilians, undermine post-conflict peacebuilding by impeding the use of land for development purposes. Moreover, while they are relatively affordable, huge financial resources are required to fund demining and to provide care to the victims.

For our part, we in Mozambique are still facing the effects of a war that ended 12 years ago. We still have millions of anti-personnel landmines across the country, and they adversely affect the resettlement of the population and the smooth resumption of vital economic activities. This is in addition to the availability of small arms and light weapons, which are mostly used in criminal activities and which contribute to insecurity.

For those reasons, Mozambique has been at the forefront of international action to curb both the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and of global efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines.

We view the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a critical step to minimize the easy availability and unlawful use of those arms, which pose a serious threat to the security, stability and development of poor countries. Also, we welcome the launching, in June 2004 at the United Nations, of multilateral negotiations on an international instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms, as a step towards devising the appropriate legal and political framework for international cooperation to eliminate the illicit trade and brokering of small arms and light weapons.

My Government supports the holding, from 29 November to 3 December 2004, of the Nairobi Summit for a Mine-Free World, a Review Conference that will provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen our resolve to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines. We sincerely hope that by then we will be drawing closer to realizing the dream of universalizing the Ottawa Convention, thus ensuring for good that the world will no longer experience the threat of anti-personnel landmines. In that connection, I would like to highlight the adoption at a ministerial meeting held last month in New York of a declaration on an African common position on anti-personnel landmines. I hope that the declaration will provide a valuable input to the Nairobi Summit.

I wish to underscore the need to strengthen international cooperation in the implementation of international instruments related to disarmament. In fact, in the area of conventional weapons, much is being done in developing countries to implement the commitments entered into, particularly actions to ban anti-personnel landmines and to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Affected countries, individually and collectively, through subregional and regional arrangements, have been making tremendous efforts to tackle the severe consequences of those weapons and to alleviate the suffering of their peoples. However, all those efforts will be ineffective and bound to fail if adequate international assistance is not rendered. We therefore call upon the international community to provide assistance to ensure the fulfilment of commitments made in the relevant international instruments. Finally, on the issue of reforms, we sincerely hope that these will reinforce the principle of providing better services to Member States, particularly those in need. Our aim is to see a strong United Nations that stands on the pillars of multilateralism, where each country can have a say on global issues. In that context, my delegation views the revitalization of the work of the First Committee as an exercise that can have a positive impact on the effectiveness of our work. Revitalization of the work of the First Committee must lead to the improvement of global security and the strengthening of multilateralism, with enhanced international cooperation towards general and complete disarmament and greater security and stability in the world.

Mr. Ovia (Papua New Guinea): Mr. Chairman, please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead our Committee this year. I assure you of my delegation's support in ensuring a productive session.

We are living in unpredictable and trying times. On the one hand, we are witnessing great advances in high technology, especially information technology, which make it very easy instantly to communicate globally, and the overwhelming effects of globalization are bringing about many positive changes. On the other hand, we also see negative forces, including new threats and great vulnerabilities.

The First Committee provides a multilateral forum to deal with all those issues, among many others. However, my statement today will focus on a limited number of issues, including terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the illicit use of small arms and light weapons and improvements in the working methods of the Committee.

As stated by my Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, the Right Honourable Sir Rabbie Namaliu, Papua New Guinea joins others in condemning in the strongest terms the recent killings of more than 330 people in cold blood in a school in Beslan; more than half of them were innocent children and women. That closely followed the loss of hundreds of others in the bombing of the Australia embassy in Jakarta, suicide bombings in Israel and Palestine, Madrid, Bali and Paris — and, of course, not to forget the horrendous incidents of 11 September 2001 in Washington and here in New York.

It is now more certain than ever that we live in an unsafe and unpredictable world where terrorists seem to roam at will. The international community, through the First Committee and the General Assembly, needs to find ways to minimize those threats and make our world a safer one again. The threat of terrorism is further exacerbated by that of weapons of mass destruction. It is indeed worrying to see evidence of terrorists seeking to obtain chemical, biological and radiological weapons.

As we are a small island country, lacking capacity and vulnerable to many of these growing security concerns, the increasing number of terrorist incidents and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are of great concern.

However, in addition to those two major issues, Papua New Guinea is also very concerned about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Those arms actually pose more of a danger to the general population of our country than weapons of mass destruction. In fact, one could say that small arms and light weapons can be considered our weapons of mass destruction; they cause more harm and kill and injure more of our people than weapons of mass destruction. That was the case, of course, in the conflict we witnessed in the past decade in the province of Bougainville.

Papua New Guinea therefore fully supports the United Nations Programme of Action on the illicit trade in that category of weapons. We also fully support efforts to negotiate a global instrument to trace and monitor the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Our delegation is looking at ways in which we can effectively participate and contribute to that end. Perhaps we also need to look at reducing weapons at their sources of manufacture.

With respect to the issue of improving the working methods of the First Committee, small delegations such as ours have been greatly assisted by changing the way we organize our meetings; alternating between the First and the Fourth Committees, combining or reducing the number of draft resolutions, and doing away altogether with those deemed not necessary. As well, we are heartened by the valuable recommendations submitted to the Secretary-General on practical ways to improve the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee.

Finally, our delegation will endeavour to consult and work together with like-minded delegations in that regard. We also believe that this is a joint effort that will make our work more effective and participatory. After all, the negative effects of war, violence and destruction are felt by all around the globe.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): With the consent of the Committee, I shall now give the floor to the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I would begin, Mr. Chairman, by joining others in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau of the First Committee on your election. I extend our best wishes for a fruitful and successful session under your able leadership.

I have asked to take the floor to address agenda item 70, Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. However, before doing so, and as a general observation, I shall begin by recalling that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as the world organization of national parliaments, has sought over past decades to make its own contribution to sustainable peace and international security in a variety of ways.

Most recently, for example, on the occasion of the 111th Assembly of the IPU, which was held in Geneva at the end of this past September, our First Standing Committee considered a report on the role of parliaments in strengthening international regimes for non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. The ensuing resolution, which has been distributed here in New York to United Nations Member States, identifies a series of ways and means by which parliaments can work at the national level, as well as internationally, among themselves and with the United Nations, in order to pursue those goals, with a particular focus on compliance and implementation of commitments undertaken.

Next week, here at United Nations Headquarters, we will be holding the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations. As a follow-up to the Geneva decisions, we look forward to an interactive exchange with senior United Nations officials and representatives of the diplomatic community on questions relating to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

Returning to agenda item 70, on strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, in 1991 the Inter-Parliamentary Union set up a process to promote security and cooperation in that region, consisting of a series of conferences and meetings that was quickly baptized the CSCM process: the conferences on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

In so doing, the IPU built upon a long and rich experience of activities to promote rapprochement, particularly in the context of the work it had carried out to reduce East-West tensions during the 1970s and 1980s through its own parliamentary Helsinki process, which was initiated several years before the actual Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process got under way. In that effort, the IPU had several clear assets. The parliaments of all countries in the Mediterranean area and those of the countries directly involved in the region were all represented in it, in the full diversity of their political spectrum. Over the years, their representatives had woven a network of political and human relations simply by working together. It was that familiarity within an institution like our own, combined with the flexibilities that parliamentary contacts and diplomacy offer, which made it possible to develop a process seeking to realize the Mediterranean ideal.

The CSCM process aims to develop a comprehensive regional policy — drawn up with the participation of all States in the region and for the benefit of all — and to lay the foundations for that process at both the intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary levels. The CSCM is intended as a meeting place where, in a climate of security and stability, a genuine cultural dialogue and a partnership designed to ensure the balanced growth of the region can develop. The CSCM is not aimed at directly tackling existing conflicts, but is conceived rather as a permanent mechanism for dialogue and negotiation, to generate positive momentum and facilitate the settlement of such disputes.

One original feature of the process is the formula of a layered participation, which includes both main participants and three categories of associate participants. That formula was adopted to take into account the political conditions particular to the region, and especially to allow for involvement by representatives from countries that do not have a Mediterranean coastline. Thus, the parliaments of all the littoral States participate as members alongside those of Jordan, Portugal and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, whereas those with significant interests in the region — Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States — take part in the process as associate members, as do Palestine and several intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organizations active in the Mediterranean.

The IPU set up three baskets to examine all questions relating to the Mediterranean: regional stability; co-development and partnership; and dialogue among civilizations and human rights. While those categories are clearly inspired by the similar CSCE process, there are also important differences. In the CSCE human rights were linked to political issues, whereas in the Mediterranean they are linked to dialogue among civilizations.

Since its inception, the CSCM has held three Inter-Parliamentary Conferences; in Malaga, Spain, in 1992; in Valletta, Malta, in 1995; and in Marseilles, France, in 2000. The CSCM has also held eight thematic meetings and maintains an ongoing consultative process at the IPU Statutory Assemblies, which take place twice a year. Throughout its now 13-year-old process, CSCM participants have made a great many proposals to lower tensions in the region and to identify areas where cooperation can be advanced. It has inspired many similar processes and has provided important ideas and building blocks for the Barcelona process.

The CSCM process has also worked to establish Mediterranean institutions for cooperation and security. Specifically, it has suggested that States establish a parliamentary assembly of the Mediterranean. At a meeting of the CSCM process held in Marrakesh, Morocco, in March 2002, participants adopted by consensus a document setting out the fundamental characteristics of a future parliamentary assembly of the Mediterranean. Since then, draft statutes for that Assembly have been drawn up.

As I mentioned, earlier this month the IPU concluded its one hundred and eleventh Assembly. On that occasion the Union decided to organize a fourth and final CSCM conference in early 2005, in Greece. While the conference will signify the end of the CSCM process within the IPU, it will also signify the creation of the first truly Mediterranean political institution: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. We are confident that that new institution, the first truly Mediterranean one, will play a significant role in strengthening security and cooperation in the region. We stand ready to work closely with that Assembly, as we do with many other regional parliamentary bodies, such as the newly established Pan-African Parliament, in making an effective and meaningful contribution to world peace and security.

Programme of work

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): In the light of consultations over the past two days, it would appear desirable, that, as soon as we have completed the list of speakers in the general debate, that we should begin our interactive dialogue, taking advantage of the presence of Under-Secretary-General Abe. With respect to the informal note that I circulated a few days ago, we do not expect the participation of any other actors in that exercise. It will just be Under-Secretary-General Abe and the representatives of Governments.

This will take place in an informal format, but in open meetings. To clarify, "informal meeting" means that the meeting will not be recorded, but the conference room will not be closed: our dialogue will not be held in private. I intend to follow that formula also for the other stages of the informal discussion.

I would also like to refer to the content of document A/C.1/59/CRP.2, and to reiterate what I said a few days ago: that I intend to divide the thematic segment into three phases so that the Committee can make the best possible use of the time allocated to it in this segment.

The first phase of the segment will be formal, so that delegations wishing to do so may speak on all of the topics on the timetable established in document A/C.1/59/CRP.2. The second phase will be informal, along the same lines that I have indicated for tomorrow's meeting. That is to say, there will be no recording of what is discussed, but the meeting will not be closed. It will be a public meeting. The third phase of the process, once again, will be a formal, official meeting so as to have a record of the introduction of draft resolutions.

The idea of the interactive dialogue is that we should be able to take up both general issues relating to the question under consideration and matters relating to all the draft resolutions that will be presented to the Committee for consideration under the thematic segment.

In preparing the indicative timetable and the specific distribution of items, I would like to point out that we have followed the customary practice of the Committee at previous sessions of the General Assembly. I would propose the following order: on Monday, 18 October, we will take up matters relating to nuclear weapons; on 19 October, our meeting will be devoted to other weapons of mass destruction and outer space (disarmament aspects); on Wednesday and Thursday, 20 and 21 October, we will address matters relating to conventional weapons; and in the morning and afternoon meetings on Friday, 22 October, we will take up regional disarmament and security, confidence-building measures, other measures relating to disarmament and disarmament mechanisms, and related matters of disarmament and international security, including education on non-proliferation and international security.

This year, in contrast with past practice, I have allocated two meetings to the debate on conventional weapons, at the request of Ambassador Thalmann of Switzerland, so that he can hold informal consultations on the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Given that timetable and the three-phase format proposed, I hope the Committee will accommodate some of the recommendations that the Committee itself made at its previous session and that the Assembly made in resolution 58/316. I hope that we will also put to the test many of those mechanisms with a view to their permanent adoption or their improvement.

I therefore urge all delegations to regard this exercise as one that is still subject to many

adjustments. We should carry it out with great flexibility — bot by the Chair and by delegations — as members use the various formats to state their positions. I hope that the outcome will demonstrate its viability and usefulness for the future.

In the absence of objection, may I take it that the Committee decides to proceed in accordance with the indicative timetable set out in document A/C.1/59/CRP.2?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/59/PV.8

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

First Committee

8th meeting

Wednesday, 13 October 2004, 3 p.m.

New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Than (Myanmar): I have the honour and privilege to take the floor on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own delegation, Myanmar.

The ASEAN countries believe that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a very important contribution to the international community's efforts for peace and security. It is the conviction of the ASEAN countries that, in view of recent political developments, there now exist conditions for the establishment of a world free from nuclear weapons.

The ASEAN countries also reaffirm the unanimous conclusion of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In that regard, we, the ASEAN countries, continue to support and intend to joint in sponsoring the draft resolution, similar to that submitted every year by Malaysia, reaffirming that important ruling.

For a number of years, the ASEAN countries have been sponsors of the yearly draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament initiated by Myanmar, calling upon nuclear-weapon States to stop immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. The draft resolution (A/C.1/59/L.26) urges nuclear-weapon States, as an immediate measure, to de-alert and deactivate immediately their nuclear weapons and to take further concrete measures to further reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems. It also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

Those two draft resolutions are part of ASEAN members' contributions to the cause of disarmament. This year, Malaysia and Myanmar, with the support of ASEAN and other sponsors, will again submit such draft resolutions. It is our ardent hope that they will enjoy broader support and increased sponsorship.

The ASEAN countries have consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We reiterate our call to the nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In that context, we welcomed the convening of the third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held in Vienna in September 2003. We also welcomed the adoption by the Conference of the 12 concrete measures, contained in the Final Declaration of the Conference, to promote the early entry into force of the CTBT. We are encouraged that three nuclear-weapon States have ratified that important Treaty to date.

We welcome the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The ASEAN countries particularly welcome the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI of the Treaty. We reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore call once again for the full and effective implementation of the steps set out in the 2000 Final Document. In that connection, we reaffirm our conviction that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT, in particular article VI on nuclear disarmament and article IV, on technical assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We note with appreciation the preparatory work done by the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT at its first session, held in New York in April 2002, its second session, held in Geneva in April and May 2003, and its third session, held in New York in April and May 2004. However, we regret the inability of the Preparatory Committee to agree at its third session on an agenda and on substantive recommendations for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

In that context, we reaffirm the importance of establishing subsidiary bodies at the 2005 Review Conference, in accordance with rule 34 of the Conference's draft rules of procedure, to consider issues related to nuclear disarmament, safety and security of peaceful nuclear programmes, security assurances and regional issues, with particular reference to the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

We strongly believe that the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones declared by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba has been a positive step towards attaining the objective of global nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

The ASEAN countries, through sustained efforts, have successfully established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. The Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone entered into force on 27 March 1997. A Protocol is annexed to the treaty for accession by the nuclear-weapon States. In welcoming the announcement by China at the ASEAN-China summit, in November 2002, of its readiness to accede to the Protocol, we wish to reiterate our call to nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible. We welcome the progress in the implementation of the Treaty and stress the importance of direct consultations between ASEAN and the five nuclear-weapon States. We consider this to be significant progress towards encouraging the accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty. We also reaffirm the importance of vigorous efforts to further strengthen cooperation in supporting the implementation of the Treaty, with a view to promoting the purposes and objectives of the Treaty, particularly ensuring early accession by the nuclear-weapon States.

We welcome the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II — Bali Concord II — at the ninth ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN community comprising three pillars — political and security cooperation; economic cooperation; and socio-cultural cooperation — in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020, as a community of South-East Asian nations bound together in partnership, in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. The ASEAN community would be achieved through the framework of the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN economic community and the ASEAN socio-cultural community. In that regard, we commended the substantial progress made since the adoption of ASEAN Concord II in the formulation and finalization of the plans of action for those three pillars, as the basis of ASEAN's drive towards full integration.

The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building efforts among the countries of the region. ASEAN has been steadfastly undertaking concrete measures to enhance regional security through various initiatives at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

We note the positive developments in the ASEAN Regional Forum process through inter-session activities and linkages between track I and track II. We take note with satisfaction, of the fruitful discussions and exchange of views at the eleventh ARF, held in Jakarta in July 2004, which welcomed the admission of Pakistan as the twenty-fourth participant in the ARF. We are particularly encouraged that the eleventh ARF reaffirmed the crucial role of the ARF as the main political and security forum in the region.

We resolve to ensure that ASEAN will continue to enhance its leading role to further the momentum of cooperation in further advancing the ARF process as its contribution to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It has also recognized the purposes and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia as the key code of conduct for the promotion of cooperation, amity and friendship within South-East Asia and between ASEAN and other ARF participants. We welcome the accession to the Treaty by the People's Republic of China and India in October 2003 and by Japan and Pakistan in July 2004, and we look forward to the accession of the Russian Federation later this year. In that connection, we call on the non-Southeast Asian countries to consider acceding to the Treaty.

We also note with satisfaction the level of confidence and trust that had been developed under the auspices of the ARF, with activities in the overlapping areas of confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy, which the ARF has begun to undertake.

We take this opportunity to express, once again, our appreciation to the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa for their effective contributions towards international peace and security. Regional seminars and forums organized by those Centres effectively contribute to the progress of the ongoing security and disarmament process in their respective regions.

We highly appreciate and fully support the dynamic activities and the substantial contributions to the security dialogue of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which has raised awareness of disarmament issues in the region. We welcome the convening of United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Sapporo, Japan, in July 2004, which focused, among other things, on the mounting challenges to nuclear non-proliferation and international responses; the nuclear black market; strengthening the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and challenges and prospects with regard to the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

We once again renew our commitment to multilateralism as an important means of pursuing and achieving our common objectives in the field of disarmament, and our determination to further promote multilateralism in that respect. It is now more urgent than ever for us, the international community, to strive for international peace and security and to redouble our efforts and live up to our commitments to the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. We, the ASEAN countries, once again reaffirm our commitment to work cooperatively to achieve those goals as a matter of utmost priority.

Mr. Chimphamba (Malawi): On behalf of my delegation, Mr. Chairman, I would like to join all the other delegations who have spoken before me in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of this very important Committee. We are confident, Sir, that your knowledge and vast experience will steer our work towards achieving lasting peace and security. My delegation therefore assures you of its full cooperation and support in that noble endeavour.

As we meet once again to deliberate in the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, we are aware that neither the Disarmament Commission nor the Conference on Disarmament has been able to reach consensus on a programme of work or an agenda. We therefore call for a greater show of political will from all the major players interested in the real consolidation of the central role of the United Nations in ensuring peace and security around the world.

Malawi is encouraged by concerted global efforts to avert and stop the threat of international terrorism. We are keenly aware of the danger of terrorists recklessly resorting to the use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and biological weapons.

It is against that background that we remain concerned that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament regime have recently come under threat or have stalled in implementation. In that regard, Malawi reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by member States and continues to call for its universality.

It is our hope that the forthcoming 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will not follow the same pattern as the last three preparatory meetings, where difficulties were created by the widely divergent perspectives among the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Malawi again welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service to operationalize the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — or Ottawa Convention. It is clear that the fight against the spread of landmines has been successfully fought under regional and international initiatives. In that regard, we wish to state that Malawi will attend the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 November to 3 December 2004.

Members may wish to know that Malawi is in the process of implementing the Convention through a multisectoral approach that involves Government and civil society. The Government of Malawi has been able to participate in the meetings of parties to the Convention since it has had access to the sponsorship programme; that has helped the country to make progress in the implementation of the Convention.

Let me conclude by joining the rest of the international community in addressing the problems of small arms and light weapons, which not only pose a threat to the security of States, but also endanger their socio-economic and political stability. Malawi is satisfied with the important progress achieved with respect to the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and the activity of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We agree that small arms and light weapons should be supplied only to Governments or other duly authorized entities and that arms transfers must be subject to national, regional and international control in order to prevent weapons from landing in the hands of heartless terrorists and non-State actors.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I am pleased to express our happiness at seeing you leading the Committee's proceedings. I am confident that your wide capabilities and expertise — grounded in your country's principled and steadfast positions on disarmament matters — will enable us to complete our work constructively and successfully. By the same token, I would like to thank Mr. Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his statement at the beginning of our general debate. Please rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of the cooperation of my delegation in achieving success in the work of the First Committee.

The picture of international peace and security once again appears gloomy. Statements made in the General Assembly by heads of State or Government, by ministers of foreign affairs and by other representatives drew an accurate picture of the international political scene today, where might prevails over law, wrong over right, and war over peace. Cold-war justifications for exorbitant military expenditures have come to an end. The same applies to today's pre-emptive wars, whose costs are very high in terms of human life and property — as we can see from a look at the deteriorating military situation.

There are clear cases on the ground for all to see. This situation cannot resolve itself. It must be resolved through a universal solidarity that combines sincere efforts with the steadfast political will to respect international legitimacy and to work in a multilateral way that can restore the world's equilibrium and ensure its continued existence.

The Conference on Disarmament was established as a result of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. At that session, the international community specified that nuclear disarmament was a priority and entrusted the Conference with accomplishing that task in the framework of a specific agenda. We have had numerous failures and few successes in that endeavour. The Conference's basic task as a multilateral negotiating forum to conclude a legally binding international instrument for nuclear disarmament within a specified time frame has not seen much progress. That failure is of the work of certain Powers which have hampered the international effort, and results also from a lack of sufficient international will to achieve the Conference's goals. The Conference has thus been prevented from achieving its goals and fulfilling its responsibilities.

Unwarranted double standards have emerged in dealing with matters relating to disarmament. While nuclear arsenals and stockpiles are growing, while new types of nuclear weapons are being invented and while the use of such weapons is posing a real threat, States are being pressured to prevent them from possessing the means of defending their security and sovereignty. That right is enshrined in the United Nations Charter, international law and international conventions in force.

At a time when we aspire to a total elimination of nuclear weapons and to achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a blind eye is turned to those who possess such weapons outside the non-proliferation regime. Worse still, such States are given support while others are barred from using nuclear technology for peaceful and development purposes.

We believe that it is more important than ever before to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a view to reviewing and assessing the implementation of the recommendations of the first special session on disarmament, held in 1978. We hope that this will enable us to reconsider and review the most important aspects of disarmament in a comprehensive manner that takes into consideration the current international situation. We hope it will also enable us to take serious action to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in a multilateral international framework and in a manner that will achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Syria has expressed its support of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. It continues to call on Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. But Israel persists in pursuing an expansionist, aggressive policy backed by a huge arsenal containing all types of weapons: conventional, non-conventional and weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. More than any other region in the world, the Middle East region is still subject to threats and the falsification of facts. Syria was among the first States that called for ridding the Middle East region of WMDs, especially nuclear weapons, and it has acted with determination to fulfil that purpose. It has contributed numerous initiatives designed to achieve that goal. The most recent was the draft resolution that we presented on behalf of the Arab Group to the Security Council on 29 December 2003, aimed at ridding the region of all WMDs, in particular nuclear weapons. This should be done under collective international control and under United Nations supervision in a manner that fosters the role of multilateral international conventions relating to disarmament.

Lack of agreement for the Arab initiative encourages Israel to consistently refuse to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. In this regard, we hope that the NPT Review Conference to be held next year will adopt an unambiguous call to Israel to accede to the Treaty. We also hope that it will set up effective machinery to achieve that goal in a manner conducive to stability and to a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

My country contributes to activities under the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms. It participated in last year's meeting held by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in Cairo in cooperation with the League of Arab States. It is preparing to take part in the meeting to be held in Algeria later this year for this purpose. We hope that meeting will be successful.

The United Nations has been the only place in which faithful efforts are made in a multilateral framework in order to achieve our aspirations of eliminating WMDs of all types, particularly nuclear weapons, and to spare humanity the danger of their use forever.

Mr. Seule (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to join the previous speakers in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau. Your extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and your comprehensive grasp of disarmament issues, Mr. Chairman, guarantee the success of our work. The delegation of Togo, for its part, wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation.

In his introductory statement at the beginning of our work, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs made a point of recalling the First Committee's highly complex and significant role in meeting the challenges facing us despite divergences in national interest, given the fundamental demands made on the United Nations in the area of international peace and security. These major challenges can indeed be met only through scrupulous respect by all States, individually and collectively, for the international engagements to which they have subscribed and which deal with, inter alia, the non-proliferation of weapons, a halt to the nuclear arms race, a ban on the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and general and complete disarmament with strengthened verification measures under United Nations control. Here we would like to welcome the unilateral decision of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to renounce its programmes of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

Togo, for its part, supports the principle of general and complete disarmament in all its forms and is engaged in ratifying and implementing the majority of the relevant conventions. Thus, my country, on 1 July 2004, deposited its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

On the regional level, Togo is implementing the moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms in West Africa. Here we sincerely hope that the negotiations begun in June 2004 to draw up an international instrument that would allow States to identify and monitor the routes used for illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons will be concluded as soon as possible. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to urge the international community to support our national commission to combat the spread and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which my country established some time ago.

On the subject of disarmament and international peace and security, we must also bring up the important role that should be allocated to United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia and the Pacific, and in Africa. Created in the context of the cold war, those institutions are now called upon to act in synergy with regional organizations to combat the many problems linked not only to the issue of disarmament, but, above all, to the advancement of peace and to post-conflict peacebuilding in regions torn apart by these conflicts, in particular in Africa.

Unfortunately, the Regional Centres are now in a most critical financial situation. Therefore, as was rightly emphasized by the head of the Togolese delegation during the general debate of the present session of the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.13), the Committee must devote greater attention to the worrisome financial situation of the three United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament so that those institutions can have access to the financial resources they need to carry out their mandates.

In that regard, on the basis of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, Togo firmly believes it is high time that the General Assembly set about reviewing ways to finance the Regional Centres to provide them with adequate financial means. By so doing, the Assembly would demonstrate its genuine support for the Organization's objectives in the areas of arms control, disarmament and peacebuilding and its appreciation of the very active role played by the Centres.

With regard to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa — which my country hosts — there can be doubt that that institution continues to make commendable efforts to carry out its assigned objectives, despite the financial difficulties it faces. As the Secretary-General emphasized in the summary of his report (A/59/209),

> "Within its limited financial resources, the Centre continued to implement its programme of work in the four priority areas endorsed in 1999 by the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States: support for peace processes and peace initiatives in Africa; practical disarmament and arms control; information, research and publication; and advocacy and resource mobilization".

The continued and alarming lack of financial resources is now drastically reducing the Regional Centre's capacity to implement its mandate and to carry out its ambitious and highly useful programme at this time of general insecurity, when peace is constantly threatened. In the light of that dilemma, Togo would like once again to invite Member States and other partners to revisit the problem and identify a solution likely to guarantee the viability of the Centres, particularly the Lomé Centre.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the 10 members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We take this opportunity to commend Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and the Department for Disarmament Affairs for supporting our disarmament cause.

The Philippines shares the concern of other delegations over the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the multilateral arena. Regrettably, there was no substantive discussion during the last session of the Disarmament Commission, which became bogged down on the issue of agenda-setting despite the efforts of the Chairman. Furthermore, the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) failed to produce a consensus report containing a substantive recommendation for the Conference.

Notwithstanding those setbacks, my delegation notes recent promising developments. First of all, the first session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in June this year, promised further efforts to curb the problem brought about by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is fortunate that that issue continues to remain at the forefront of United Nations concerns.

The Philippines has been taking every possible step to enhance our programme aimed at addressing problems related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, marking and record-keeping, as well as cooperation in the tracing of small arms. The Philippine National Police has been strictly enforcing our basic firearms law, seeing to it that weapons manufacturing processes are in accordance with the law and other regulations. We also use a macro-etching process that enables us to determine or restore the original serial numbers of firearms that have been defaced or tampered with.

Secondly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), with its verification and on-site inspection regime, is a major contribution to the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Last month, the Philippines endorsed the joint ministerial statement on the CTBT (A/59/550, annex), which called for universal adherence to the Treaty. Once again, we join the appeal to all States to refrain from pursuing programmes that would undermine the CTBT pending its entry into force.

The Philippines has consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the NPT. It is indeed disappointing to note that, four years after the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the collective and unequivocal commitment by nuclear-weapon States to the transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains largely unrealized. Once again, we urge concerned States to undertake further efforts to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The Philippines also reaffirms its support for the much-delayed convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). In that regard, much work has already been done in the Disarmament Commission on the agenda and objectives of SSOD IV. Let us not relent in our resolve to convene a new special session, bearing in mind the fast-developing events in the international peace and security environment.

My delegation is encouraged by the recent developments in our region related to the imminent formation of an ASEAN security community, which would lead to an ASEAN whose members were at peace with one another and with the world at large. We are of the view that an ASEAN security community would strengthen our capacity to deal with security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional.

The Philippines views nuclear-weapon-free zones not only as instruments for nuclear non-proliferation, but also as important contributions to nuclear disarmament. In our region, we remain hopeful that there will be fruitful negotiations with nuclear Powers on the South-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. My delegation also acknowledges China's interest in acceding to the zone.

In conclusion, the Philippines associates itself with the call of other delegations for comprehensive reform not only of the General Assembly but also of the Main Committees, to allow them to respond more effectively to the challenges that confront our ever-changing world.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time I have taken the floor, I wish to congratulate you on your election. I am sure that, under your experienced leadership, our deliberations will be successful. My delegation offers its full support to you and to the other members of the Bureau, working under your able guidance.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group. We wish additionally to comment on a number of items on the Committee's agenda that are of particular importance to Ecuador.

My Government attaches vital importance to general, complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament and TO THE non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We are convinced that international peace and security, to a great extent, depend on the achievement of those objectives. For that reason, we are concerned by the lack of progress in the sphere of disarmament at the multilateral level. For seven years, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to hold a substantive session. Nor was the Disarmament Commission able to reach agreement on an agenda at its 259th meeting. Moreover, the Preparatory Committee for the May 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been unable to make substantive recommendations.

We thus have even greater reason to reaffirm our support for the objectives of the NPT, especially for the need for nuclear States to report on progress in the dismantling and total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in keeping with their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, as well as the commitments they undertook at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and at the 2000 Review Conference.

We view the NPT as a basic instrument for achieving a safer and more peaceful world. Thus, universal adherence and total and non-discriminatory compliance with its provisions are necessary. We urge States that have not yet become parties to the Treaty, and nuclear-weapon States in particular, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible so that their nuclear facilities can be subjected to International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards and so that they undertake to carry out their nuclear programmes within the framework of the non-proliferation regime. In that context, we are greatly concerned at the modernization of nuclear weapons by some Powers that have also shown a lack of will to carry out substantive negotiations on their total elimination.

The lack of progress in the nuclear disarmament process makes it necessary to agree on a legally binding instrument through which nuclear Powers would guarantee not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States that do not possess such weapons or that are Party to the Treaty. Likewise, we are convinced that only the total elimination of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction will guarantee that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists or other non-State actors.

We support Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) against WMD proliferation, which aims, in particular, at preventing terrorists and other non-State actors from having access to such weapons. Nevertheless, we consider such legally binding measures, which represent a commitment for all United Nations Member States, should be negotiated and adopted at the multilateral level; in that way, we could avoid a situation whereby limited groups that do not represent all the States Members of the United Nations could seek to impose such measures through a process that is not contemplated by the Charter.

A few days ago, as part of its commitment to disarmament, Ecuador signed the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, also known as the Hague Code of Conduct, which has been signed by 117 countries. We have sponsored the draft resolution submitted by the delegation of Chile in its capacity as Chairman of the Code of Conduct; we are aware that the adoption of that important text will establish cooperation between the Code and the United Nations.

Ecuador supports complete implementation of the July 2001 Programme of Action on the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and of the recommendations of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing small arms and light weapons, held in June 2004.

In the 12 July 2004 Declaration adopted at the San Francisco de Quito summit of the Andean Community, the Presidents of the Andean countries renewed their commitment to give a greater thrust to the strategy of member countries on preventing, combating and eradicating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects through the implementation of decision 552, adopted by the Andean Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Andean Community. Additionally, the heads of State instructed their respective national authorities to create, before December 2004, national coordinating committees. We also support the proclamation of the Andean peace area, contained in the San Francisco de Quito Declaration of 12 July, adopted at the fifteenth summit of the Presidents of the Andean countries; this act promotes peaceful coexistence among the countries of the subregion: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to highlight the particular importance that my country confers on the Convention on the Banning of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, to which it became a party on 29 April 1999. After four years of arduous work in large populated areas of our southern border, we have been able to remove and destroy these lethal artefacts, thanks to valuable contributions made by Canada, Japan and the United States, some of which were channelled through the Organization of American States. Nonetheless, there are still extensive mined areas along the border which need to be cleaned up.

Ecuador has the honour to inform the Committee that, in compliance with its commitments under the Ottawa Convention, it has acted to destroy the totality of its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. In view of that experience, my delegation calls on countries that are not yet parties to the Convention to accede as soon as possible so that it may become a universal instrument.

Mr. Kaludjerović (Serbia and Montenegro): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, with your outstanding professional skills and experience, we shall have successful and fruitful deliberations. In that regard, you can count on the support and full cooperation of my delegation. Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Serbia and Montenegro has aligned itself with the statement of the Netherlands made on behalf of the European Union. At this point, I would like to make the following additional remarks.

There is no doubt that international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) pose the most serious security threat of our time. The link among the proliferation of such weapons, new forms of terrorism and transnational organized crime undermines global peace and security and requires resolute and timely action by the international community.

We cannot afford to fail in this effort, since the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists could have tragic consequences of unprecedented proportions. The international community should therefore consolidate and step up its efforts to deal successfully with such global threats. In doing so, the United Nations should play a central role in the context of cooperation with the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

The United Nations has at its disposal appropriate mechanisms for the promotion of international peace and security. In order to achieve that goal, we have to improve existing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control instruments. It is particularly important to achieve universality of the existing instruments and to enhance their effectiveness by enforcing strict compliance and strengthening verification regimes.

In order to increase confidence among Member States and promote peace and security, we should encourage greater transparency and a more extensive exchange of information in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, my country attaches particular importance to the strengthening of regional stability and security as well as to the promotion of good-neighbourly relations with all States in our region. In that respect, Serbia and Montenegro is very active in regional initiatives such as the South-East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group (SEEGROUP), the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), the South-Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. We pay special attention to the implementation of the agreement on subregional arms control, which made a major contribution to the promotion of stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

Serbia and Montenegro is fully committed to honouring the obligations it has undertaken under international treaties in this field. My country ratified the Ottawa Convention in September 2003, and the Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004. As a country seriously affected by the problem of landmines, Serbia and Montenegro shares the view of the importance of the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention to the promotion of greater security and trust.

Serbia and Montenegro stands ready to honour its obligations under the Convention, including the destruction of 1.3 million anti-personnel-landmine stocks in the upcoming four-year period. However, in order to fulfil that obligation in a timely and proper fashion, we need additional financial resources. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) for its assistance, and I would like to invite others to help us in this effort.

Nevertheless, there is another segment of the implementation of the Convention that is equally important and that represents a problem for developing countries and post-conflict societies. The rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of landmine victims is an issue that should be addressed in a more effective and concrete manner by the international community.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Serbia and Montenegro supports efforts to achieve its universality and full implementation. We attach great importance to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with which we signed the Framework Agreement on Technical Cooperation in 2003.

Serbia and Montenegro has been making continued efforts to improve the protection and security measures for radioactive materials and supports the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

My country deposited its instrument of ratification for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 19 May 2004, thereby joining 170 States parties to the Treaty. We favour the early entry into force of the CTBT and, in that context, we supported the September 2004 ministerial statement on the CTBT.

I would like to point once again to the need for serious action aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Serbia and Montenegro supports and is ready to participate in all international efforts aimed at suppressing the spread of this type of weapon. We consider that Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is an important step in that direction. In addition to making every possible international effort, it is of the utmost importance to adopt adequate laws at the national level in order to create conditions for strict arms trade control.

In Serbia and Montenegro, the process of the adoption of a new law on trade in arms, military equipment and dual-purpose goods is under way and is expected to be adopted soon.

Serbia and Montenegro fully abides by the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and supports all efforts aimed at improving the Convention's non-proliferation regime.

My country supports the universal and strict implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and it is ready to honour its obligations under articles 5 and 6 of the Convention. Last July, Serbia and Montenegro organized an international training course in Krusevac on protection against chemical weapons, with the participation of representatives from 16 countries.

Furthermore, as a subscribing State, we fully support the Hague Code of Conduct as a very important initiative in dealing with missile proliferation.

The Government of Serbia and Montenegro also adopted a declaration stating that it is undertaking voluntarily to comply with and implement the provisions contained in the Missile Technology Control Regime documents.

Unfortunately, my country's experience has demonstrated the gravity of the danger posed by the spread of illegal small arms and light weapons and the destabilizing effect it can have on social and economic development. We therefore support the activities of the Working Group to negotiate an international instrument which would enable States to combat more effectively the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. Such an instrument would also enable greater international cooperation through the adoption of common standards in marking, record-keeping and the exchange of information.

Serbia and Montenegro accepted amended article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and acceded to Additional Protocol IV. We also participated in the negotiations which led to the adoption of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war.

We continue to support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on explosive remnants of war and mines other than anti-personnel mines, and we hope that those negotiations will be brought to a successful close.

Last but not least, Serbia and Montenegro is firmly committed to reforming and streamlining the First Committee. We are confident that, by working together, we can find ways to improve the work of the First Committee so that it can address more effectively threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Ayalogu (Nigeria): Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I wish warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will provide the requisite leadership to steer our work to a successful conclusion. Let me also, through you, congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you and the Bureau of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I wish also to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his introductory statement, which we found very useful.

This meeting is being held at a time when the international community is faced with increasingly divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. The need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The past decade has witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. Those achievements flowed from shared international concerns about the danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose to humankind.

By contrast, the international community has recorded a string of failures on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade. The CTBT has not yet entered into force due to its lack of ratification by some States whose ratification is mandatory for it to enter into force. The negotiations to conclude a compliance protocol on biological weapons remain inconclusive, just as no progress has been made in negotiating an instrument to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. The perennial paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament appears to have assumed a permanent character. Of no less significance is the failure of other disarmament machinery, in particular the Disarmament Commission, to agree on an agenda for its work. Similarly, despite the efforts made over the past several years, the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) remains as elusive as ever.

With regard to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, Nigeria fully supports the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors' proposal — as a mechanism for breaking the existing impasse in agreeing on a work programme for the Conference. Nigeria also believes that it is time to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. But, for the outcome to be meaningful, it should contain a reliable verification mechanism that does not exclude existing stockpiles.

In the face of the general stalemate in the field of arms control and disarmament, we are convinced that the time has come for all States to demonstrate the necessary political will in order to make progress in this area, especially in confronting the common challenge of the proliferation of arms around the globe. One of these major challenges is the threat posed by the existence, and the consequent proliferation, of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. As a result, those weapons continue to be an issue of grave concern to the international community. Member States have a moral obligation towards humankind to totally eliminate those weapons and to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control. That is the most effective way to guarantee that the weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists.

That brings me to the problem of lack of compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation regime by States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As we all know, the Treaty remains one of the most vital instruments in the maintenance of international peace and security. The impression is often created that the obligation to comply with the Treaty lies only with non-nuclear-weapon States parties; that could be detrimental to the aims and objectives of the Treaty and, ultimately, to the enhancement of international peace and security. All States parties, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, have an obligation to ensure non-proliferation in all its aspects. In a similar manner, every State party is under an obligation to fulfil its commitment to the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, in keeping with article VI of the Treaty.

There is need to reaffirm that commitment at the seventh Review Conference of the Treaty, to be held next year. It is regrettable, however, that, at its third session, held in May this year, the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference failed to agree on an agenda or recommendations for the Conference, thus raising doubts about the fate of the Review Conference and the NPT itself.

On regional disarmament, the Nigerian delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. In that regard, we call for the ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — by the required number of States so that it can enter into force without further delay.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the full implementation of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, as recently demonstrated by my country's establishment of a national council for the full implementation of the two Conventions. The Federal Government has also submitted a national report to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in compliance with article III of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, Nigeria has completed a national register of chemical materials imported, produced or consumed in the country and is vigorously pursuing the establishment of a chemical reference laboratory where chemical samples will be tested. Two separate draft national laws, on chemical and biological weapons, are currently under active consideration by the appropriate organs of the State. The Federal Government of Nigeria is also seeking the cooperation of the OPCW in the review of existing laws of the Federation that impact on the national implementation legislation related to the two conventions.

Nigeria remains unequivocal in its support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. It has always stressed the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, among other things, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we call for the ratification of the Treaty by all States, in particular the remaining 11 of the 44 States whose ratification is mandatory for its entry into force. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, it is important that the moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions and explosions of any other nuclear device be maintained.

Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the obligations undertaken in the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on small arms and light weapons. We welcome the commencement of negotiations for an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. The magnitude of the problem posed by the proliferation of small arms demands that the instrument envisaged should be legally binding for effective implementation. It is our belief that the success of the Open-ended Working Group on tracing will have a positive impact on the forthcoming Second Biennial Meeting of States on small arms in 2005 and on the small arms review conference in 2006, which will assess the progress made so far in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In the West African subregion, to which we belong, consideration is currently being given to achieving the ultimate objective of transforming the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on import and export of small arms from a political instrument, as it currently is, into a legally binding convention. The cooperation of the international community will be absolutely essential in realizing that important objective.

Nigeria's unrelenting fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was further advanced with the destruction, on 2 September 2004, of 1,139 illicit firearms and 1,474 items of ammunition, in commemoration of United Nations Small Arms Destruction Day. Earlier this year, from 22 to 24 March, a three-day ECOWAS conference on combating illicit small arms brokering and trafficking was held in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, under the sponsorship of the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The conference was successful in sensitizing ECOWAS member States about the problem of illicit brokering and helped in developing a common understanding of ways to address the problem, including subregional coordination mechanisms.

My delegation welcomes the forthcoming First Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year, as an excellent opportunity not only to evaluate the progress that has been made in implementation over the past five years, but also to chart the course for the complete eradication of the weapons by the second review conference in 2009. We call upon all States parties to attend the Conference at the highest possible level.

This year, as it has done in the past, my delegation is again sponsoring a draft resolution entitled "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services" (A/C.1/59/L.4). The programme, which Nigeria initiated in 1978, has trained 645 fellows from 152 States. We appreciate the support of the Member States that have continued to provide resources and facilities for participants in the programme. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which the Secretariat has implemented the programme over the years. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution on the programme, as they have always done in the past.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Let me join all previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that under your keen stewardship the Committee will have a productive session and will be successful in the endeavours we have embarked on. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Ambassador Sareva for his remarkable work accomplished during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Every year Armenia takes the opportunity provided by the general debate to inform the Committee of its advances in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and to share its views on current political processes and challenges. This year is no exception. As a country that has adhered to the principles of non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy from day one, Armenia attaches the highest importance to nuclear safety. On 8 January 2004, Armenia — the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to sign one — ratified its Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards agreement; it entered into force on 28 January 2004.

Armenia fully supports and endorses IAEA efforts to enhance the safety and security of radioactive sources. In a letter to the IAEA Director General in August 2004, Armenia's Foreign Minister informed him of my country's commitment to follow and promote the guidance contained in the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and to encourage other countries to do the same.

On 10 September 2004, during the Group of Eight (G-8) Senior Officials Group meeting with the former Soviet Union States in Geneva, Armenia was recognized as a participant in the G-8 Action Plan on Non-Proliferation and accepted the guidelines contained therein.

The Libyan example is an encouraging one. However, it has made the need for additional measures to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its verification efforts even more imperative. In that respect, Armenia encourages finding a negotiated solution to outstanding nuclear issues and supports all efforts towards that end.

In this age of globalization, with increasingly open borders, rapid communications and technological advances, the effectiveness of international export control regimes is more important than ever in furthering disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. I want to stress that my country is sparing no effort to strengthen its national export control system, with a view to both guaranteeing the legitimate use of and trade in dual-use items and technologies and providing exporters and the international community with due assurances. I am pleased to state here that our law on State control over and the export of dual-use items and technologies, as well as on their transit through the territory of the Republic of Armenia was ratified and entered into force at the end of 2003. In May 2004 the Government of Armenia adopted a decree regulating expertise relating to dual-use items. It is currently working on updating its national control lists.

Effective export control implies well-trained and experienced specialists. In that respect, disarmament and education go hand in hand. We are doing our best to gain more experience in this field through participation in various cooperative regional and bilateral programmes. A number of seminars and training courses for representatives of different Government agencies on various aspects of export control and related issues have been organized in Armenia with the active support of the United States Government.

The efficient functioning of export control has become more important with the increased threat of international terrorism — amplified by the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) through their acquisition by non-State actors. Armenia supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which reaffirms that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security. In that respect, joint efforts and the development and maintenance of effective export control regimes are needed to prevent the spread of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Exactly a week ago Armenia became the newest subscriber to the Hague Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles, thus pledging itself to the common goal of preventing and curbing the proliferation of ballistic missile systems capable of delivering WMDs. My country considers this to be one of the international community's most important initiatives to regulate outstanding disarmament issues and strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms.

Armenia believes that disarmament and non-proliferation objectives can be achieved only through vigorous and concerted efforts at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Armenia stands ready to add its contribution to making our world safer and more secure.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Mr. Chairman, let me begin by offering you and all the other members of the Bureau my delegation's warmest congratulations on your respective elections. We trust, Sir, that under your wise leadership the work of our Committee will be steered to a successful conclusion. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your mandate.

We align ourselves fully with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Nonetheless, we would like to highlight some underlying points.

Despite some progress in political discussions towards the resumption of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, whose role is to negotiate new arms control and disarmament agreements, there is as yet no light at the end of the tunnel as regards that global exercise to ensure international peace and security. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment in paragraph 69 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) that

> "Several issues relating to weapons of mass destruction remained of great concern to the international community. These included the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism. Such developments jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force."

The peace-loving world community thus faces an uphill battle to address the risks of a potential nuclear war and to free the world of weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, our planet continues to be plagued by lingering armed conflicts, acts of aggression and violence, terror, interference in the internal affairs of States, ethnic strife and civil wars. Those instances of instability and intolerance not only have undermined development gains and the endeavours of the majority of nations, developing countries in particular, but could also lead to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction against humankind.

In the face of such a dangerous situation, intensified, integrated and coordinated efforts must be made by the world community to address the root causes of friction and to eliminate flash points around the world.

Primarily, greater strides must be made in the holistic pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To that end, we maintain that urgent consideration must be given to the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument that would provide security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. It is our fervent and legitimate hope that the draft resolution on nuclear disarmament (A/C.1/59/L.26), sponsored by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and initiated by the Union of Myanmar, will receive the full support of all member States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic remains of the view that the absolute and most credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is the total elimination of such weapons. We therefore welcome all efforts undertaken at the international, regional and national levels aimed at reinforcing measures to reduce nuclear risks and dangers. We join the call of the Non-Aligned Movement for the holding of an international conference at the earliest possible date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased, time-bound programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. In that context, we reaffirm our support for the appeal of world leaders, contained in the Millennium Declaration, for stronger efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction — particularly nuclear weapons — and to keep all options open with regard to achieving that goal, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means to eliminate nuclear dangers.

We continue to share the concern of the majority of Member States over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international environment conducive to the promotion of disarmament and to the strengthening of international security. The abrogation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems brings new challenges to strategic stability and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We cannot fail to be alarmed that the implementation of a national missile defence system could trigger an arms race, the further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

In our view, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should remain a cornerstone of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It is essential that all States parties to that important Treaty — especially nuclear-weapon States — fulfil their obligations as set out therein. We regret to note the inability of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NTP Review Conference to agree on an agenda or substantive recommendations for the Conference.

Cognizant of the significant implications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for the process of nuclear disarmament, the Lao People's Democratic Republic ratified the Treaty in October 2000. That showed our Government's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and reflected our aspiration to live in peace and to build a world free from nuclear threats. However, for the Treaty to be effective, those States signatories that have not yet done so need to ratify it to ensure its universality at the earliest possible date. We also stress the need for the full and effective attainment of the CTBT's objectives by all States signatories, particularly nuclear-weapon States.

Equally essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security are universal adherence to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and, in particular, the strengthening of the Convention through multilateral negotiations on a legally binding protocol. We are also of the view that the threat of biological weapons as instruments of war and terror has highlighted the necessity and urgency of ensuring that the Convention is effective. In that regard, strong emphasis must be placed on the need for all States parties to pursue the objectives set forth by the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention. I stress that the only sustainable way in which to strengthen the Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement.

We believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a positive and helpful step towards the goal of global nuclear disarmament. As a State party to the Bangkok Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has made every effort to contribute to ASEAN's collective efforts in that regard. Yet, for the Treaty to be effective, nuclear-weapon States must accede to its Protocol. We therefore join other ASEAN member States in welcoming the announcement by the People's Republic of China that it is prepared to accede to the Protocol. We renew our appeal to other nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

In view of that situation, it is obvious that one of the most urgent tasks of United Nations Members is to work together in earnest for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that, in order to accomplish that task, we must spare no effort to put the disarmament process back on track. Furthermore, the root causes of instability and conflict — above all, poverty — ought to be dealt with in a more responsible manner. Only by doing so will we be able to gradually build a world that is filled with peace and free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): At this time, we will suspend the recording of our proceedings and will move on to a more informal format in order to encourage the interactivity and frankness we have been asked to practise by recent General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 58/316.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.9

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee

9th meeting
Thursday, 14 October 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Shamsher M. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you most warmly on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I am confident that the deliberations of the Committee under your able and skilled stewardship will come to fruition. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement at the 2nd meeting.

We are meeting here at a time when the concept of multilateralism — the foundation on which the Charter was constructed — is at grave risk. It is regrettable to note that the Disarmament Commission has not been able to agree on an agenda after years of deliberations and that it has again failed to adopt a substantive report on its work. The Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral forum for negotiation on disarmament, also could not come up with a programme of work, thus blocking substantive work on disarmament.

Deliberations in the First Committee over the past week have only reaffirmed those concerns. We cannot overemphasize the need to identify specific, practical and transparent methods to achieve complete disarmament and non-proliferation under effective international control. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work is a sad reflection of the lack of political will, particularly on the part of the major players, in addressing disarmament issues.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and calls upon Member States to take concrete and effective measures that will complement ongoing efforts to strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in his report on the work of the Organization that "The architects of the Charter were guided by a central idea — that durable international peace could be built only on foundations of interdependence" (*A/59/1, para. 296*). Bangladesh is thus a strong advocate of establishing the supremacy of the rule of law and multilateralism in all areas of international relations, including in the areas of non-proliferation and disarmament.

We are disappointed with the meagre progress made in the Conference on Disarmament this year. Strong political will among member States is essential to push the process ahead, enabling the Conference on Disarmament to resume its role of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements, with an emphasis on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

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We are also concerned at the slow pace of disarmament, at violations of non-proliferation commitments and at the threat of terrorism. Such developments jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of the unilateral or pre-emptive use of force.

We are concerned at the lack of progress on the part of the nuclear-weapon States in accomplishing the elimination of their arsenals with a view to nuclear disarmament. We wish to stress the threat to humanity that derives from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. We cannot but underscore the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons to save the world from the dangers of nuclear proliferation. We urge the parties concerned to commence negotiations on that issue without delay.

We are also concerned that the development of new types of nuclear weapons is being considered. We wish to reiterate that making provision for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is in contravention to the negative security assurances that have been provided by the nuclear-weapon States. The development of new types of nuclear weapons is also in contravention of the assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States at the time of the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that the Treaty would prevent the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh views the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We regret that the continued inflexible postures of some of the nuclear-weapon States continue to prevent the proper functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish to emphasize the need to start negotiations on a phased programme aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention, within a specific time frame.

We refer to the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We regret that no progress has been made as yet in the fulfilment of that obligation. Bangladesh reiterates its call for an international conference at the earliest possible date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction. We believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We note with concern the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and to the strengthening of international security. Bangladesh calls for the immediate commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Bangladesh welcomes the report prepared by the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All Its Aspects and the convening of another Panel of Governmental Experts to explore the issue further. We are convinced that a multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to the issue of missiles in all its aspects would contribute to international peace and security.

Bangladesh, a country with an impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to pursuing universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have consciously and unconditionally chosen to remain non-nuclear. Our unequivocal commitment to full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects emanates from our constitutional obligations with regard to general and complete disarmament. Bangladesh is the first annex-2 nation in South Asia to have signed the CTBT.

As a party to almost all disarmament-related treaties, including the NPT, the CTBT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, Bangladesh attaches particular importance to strict adherence to those treaties. We consider that nuclear testing of any kind undermines nuclear non-proliferation, both horizontal and vertical, and constitutes a major threat to international peace and security. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including the related Additional Protocol. All of that is tangible testimony to our unswerving commitment to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

There is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Here, I should like to refer to the statement made by the leader of the Bangladesh delegation to the General Assembly this year:

> "We believe that there is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Bangladesh is party to all major international conventions and treaties on disarmament. (We have renounced all weapons of mass destruction.) Our geographical location makes nuclear weapons a direct and legitimate cause for concern to us in the South Asia region. Bangladesh therefore supports all measures, partial and otherwise, towards arms control and conventional and nuclear disarmament". (*A/59/PV.7, p. 33*)

We urge all countries — particularly the major military Powers — to curb their military expenditures and to devote part of the resources made available by implementing disarmament treaties to the economic and social development of the developing countries. It is our conviction that the Millennium Development Goals can best be achieved within the matrix of disarmament, reduction in military expenditure, the devotion of resources to poverty eradication and sustained confidence-building measures.

Bangladesh supports regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. We believe that confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute significantly to disarmament. We welcome all existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the establishment of such zones in South Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world. The Kathmandu process must be strengthened in contributing to regional peace and security in Asia and the Pacific. The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at should be pursued with all seriousness to cover more and more regions. In South Asia, India and Pakistan must relinquish their nuclear weapons and must join the NPT.

It is disconcerting to note the persistence of undue restrictions on exports to developing countries of material, equipment and technology for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. That is in contravention of the provisions of the NPT. Bangladesh calls for the immediate and non-discriminatory fulfilment by nuclear-weapon States of their obligations under article IV of the NPT. We would like to reaffirm the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and to reiterate that any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities, operational or under construction, poses a great danger to human beings and the environment and constitutes a grave violation of international law, the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are deeply concerned over the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. We urge effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted at the United Nations Conference held from 9 to 20 July 2001 in New York. The Programme outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach towards addressing the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels.

Bangladesh is greatly concerned at the increasing number of civilians, including women and children, who fall victim to anti-personnel mines in conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe that there is a need for the international community to provide necessary assistance to landmine clearance operations as well as a need for the rehabilitation of victims and for their social and economic reintegration in landmine-affected countries. We urge those States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We welcome with satisfaction the adoption of successive General Assembly resolutions on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It is important to note that the most effective way in which to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.

We remain convinced that the establishment of the rule of law and multilateralism are the only options for us in dealing with issues relating to international peace and security, including disarmament. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations system assume paramount importance in that context.

Next year, we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. It will be a moment for reflection — a moment to explore new ideas that can ensure collective security in all its dimensions for all the nations on Earth. That was both the mission and the objective of the founding fathers of the United Nations, which we are duty-bound to uphold.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee has heard the last speaker in the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items, thus completing the first phase of its work. I take this opportunity, on behalf of all the members of the Bureau, to express our gratitude for all the words of congratulation and support that have been addressed to me and my colleagues during the debate — despite the plea that these be omitted in the interest of efficiency.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.

United Nations
A/C.1/59/PV.10

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

First Committee

10th meeting
Monday, 18 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the programme of work and timetable, today the Committee will begin the second phase of its work, devoted to thematic discussion on item subjects as well as introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items.

I would like to stress that during this stage of our work, I will maintain a certain degree of flexibility, as I have done in previous meetings of the Committee, in order to facilitate the participation of delegations in the formal and informal parts of the meetings.

In conformity with the decisions on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee, during this phase of our work, the Committee will strive to combine discussion of items with the introduction of the corresponding draft resolutions. As delegations will recall, the timetable for these discussions is contained in A/C.1/59/CRP.2, in which the heading of the section on education should be "Education for disarmament and non-proliferation".

As I have stated, in the second phase of the Committee's work I intend to divide the thematic discussions into three segments so that the Committee can make the best use of the time allotted to it and try to find approaches for a more in-depth dialogue, using an unrecorded, interactive format in the middle part of these meetings. It is important that everyone be aware that only the first and last sections of each meeting will appear in the verbatim records.

I invite delegations to keep their statements as brief as possible in order to preserve a format of fluid discussion and give all speakers the greatest possible opportunity for interaction. We want to discuss nuclear weapons in a certain degree of detail, and not repeat the general debate.

When we have heard the last speaker, I will invite Ms. Patricia Lewis, in her capacity as an expert, to introduce the second segment of the Committee's work.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): Mr. Chairman, I heard your plea to make short statements, but I am afraid that this statement is not very short. Bear in mind, however, that I speak on behalf of more than 30 countries. At least, it is shorter than 30 times five minutes.

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former

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Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

As in last year's general debate of the First Committee, as well as in last April's general debate in the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the European Union wants to reiterate that it regards the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament under the Treaty's article VI. The integrity of the NPT must be preserved and strengthened.

The possession of nuclear weapons by States outside the NPT and non-compliance with the Treaty's provisions by States parties to the Treaty risk undermining non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Therefore, the European Union continues to attach special importance to achieving universal adherence to the NPT. We therefore call on the three States that are not at present parties to the NPT to accede unconditionally as non-nuclear-weapon States. We also call on all States parties to comply fully with the Treaty.

The European Union considers a positive outcome of the upcoming 2005 Review Conference to be of crucial importance in preserving the integrity of the NPT. The European Union supports wholeheartedly the objectives laid down in the Treaty and is committed to the effective implementation of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference and the decisions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We especially attach great importance to the issues of universality and compliance, underlining the importance of all three pillars of the NPT: non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The European Union will do its utmost to achieve a positive outcome.

The European Union considers a nuclear non-proliferation regime of universal character, supported by a strong system of international safeguards, to be an essential prerequisite for collective security. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards constitute the NPT's operational verification instrument. Challenges to the Treaty and to the non-proliferation regime have in recent years emphasized the necessity of full compliance and the need to work actively towards universal adherence. The European Union is fully committed to the NPT and to the three mutually reinforcing pillars on which it is based. The European Union will continue its efforts to maintain the authority and the integrity of the Treaty.

The EU believes that the international safeguards system of the IAEA is the fundamental pillar of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is a technical instrument in support of the political goal of sustaining an environment in which there can be peaceful use of nuclear energy without the diversion of nuclear material or the concealment of nuclear material or nuclear activities directed to nuclear weapons.

The EU considers the universal adoption and implementation of comprehensive safeguards agreements and of additional protocols to them to be a prerequisite to an effective and credible safeguards system. Together, the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and the additional protocols constitute the verification standard. The EU strongly supports the strengthening of the IAEA's safeguards system and considers that additional protocols are an integral part of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system. We consider adherence to them to be an essential means of demonstrating fulfilment of States parties' obligations under article III of the NPT. EU member States are working towards making additional protocols a condition of supply for nuclear exports.

Following the entry into force of the Additional Protocol for the EU on 30 April this year, the Additional Protocol is now in the process of being implemented by all States members of the enlarged EU. The EU urges all States that have not yet done so to sign an additional protocol at the first possible opportunity. The EU urges all States that have signed but not yet brought into force their respective safeguards agreements and additional protocols to do so as soon as possible.

The illicit trade related to weapons of mass destruction, in particular the trade in highly sensitive nuclear equipment and technology, is a matter of serious concern. The reality of that illicit trade became clear with the revelation of clandestine networks supplying elements for conversion and centrifuge programmes. We fully endorse the call of the Director

General of the IAEA for full cooperation from all IAEA member States in identifying the supply routes, sources of technology and related equipment. We must be united in our common endeavour to strengthen the non-proliferation regimes by closing existing loopholes. The European Union is therefore committed, in its strategy, to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls, which we consider a necessary complement to our non-proliferation obligations under the NPT. In that context, the EU strongly supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which, inter alia, calls upon all States, in accordance with their national legal authorities and legislation and consistent with international law, to take cooperative action to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, their means of delivery and related materials. In that context, the EU also reiterates its support for the Proliferation Security Initiative, also known as the Krakow Initiative.

The EU policy is to pursue an international agreement on the prohibition of the production of nuclear materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The EU attaches special importance to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory and universal treaty banning the production of such fissile material, which would strengthen both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and thus international security. The EU and its member States have actively worked in the Conference on Disarmament in the search for a consensus to launch a negotiation on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator and the mandate it contains. Until a cut-off treaty enters into force, all States are urged to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material destined for nuclear weapons. The EU welcomes the actions of those of the five nuclear-weapon-States that have such a moratorium in place.

The EU believes that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an essential part of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. That was reaffirmed in the general joint ministerial declaration of 23 September 2004 during the ministerial week of the General Assembly. At that meeting, Ministers of Foreign Affairs once again expressed their support for the CTBT. They affirmed that the CTBT is to make an important contribution to one of the most important challenges the world is facing today: preventing the proliferation of materials, technologies and knowledge that can be used for nuclear weapons.

The EU reiterates that it attaches the utmost importance to the entry into force of the CTBT at the earliest possible date. That is why the EU continues to call on those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT, without delay and without conditions. In particular, we call for early ratification by the so-called annex-II countries: States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force. The EU believes that a legally binding prohibition of nuclear-weapon-test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, as well as a credible verification regime, are vital.

The EU strongly supports the work of the Special Representative of the ratifying States, Mr. Jaap Ramaker. Mr. Ramaker will visit several of the annex-II countries this autumn to promote universal adherence to the CTBT. Progress is being made, and, at this moment, 11 more ratifications are required to achieve that goal. We hope to move closer to entry into force of the Treaty and to work towards its universality, because global adherence to the Treaty can contribute to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to the process of nuclear disarmament and, therefore, to the enhancement of international peace and security. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, the EU urges all States to abide by a moratorium and to refrain from any actions that are contrary to the obligations and provisions of the CTBT.

There are concerns about the nuclear programmes of a number of countries. These relate in particular to civilian nuclear programmes which might be misused for military ends. In that context, the EU notes with interest the ongoing discussion on measures to strengthen control over the most sensitive parts of the fuel cycle.

The Iranian nuclear programme continues to be a matter of grave concern for the EU. The EU recalls previous resolutions on this issue and the declaration of 19 June 2003, and it fully supports resolution GOV/2004/79 of the IAEA Board of Governors and calls on Iran to immediately comply with all requirements in the resolution.

The EU welcomes the fact that with regard to the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the IAEA seems to have an increasingly clear understanding of the nature and the extent of Iran's nuclear programme. However, it is a matter of serious concern that after two years, a number of issues still await clarification. The EU therefore reiterates the call on Iran, as stated in the resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors on 18 September, to assist the IAEA to understand the full extent and the nature of its enrichment programme and to take all steps within its power to clarify the outstanding issues before the next Board meeting. It also stresses that voluntary suspension of enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, as called for by the Board, would provide the Board with additional confidence in Iran's future activities and considers it necessary to promote confidence that Iran immediately suspend all enrichment-related activities.

We welcome Iran's submission of the declarations under articles 2 and 3 of its Additional Protocol and note the cooperation provided to the Agency following detailed discussions in July and August 2004. We urge Iran to continue to enhance that cooperation and urge Iran once again to ratify its Protocol without delay.

The EU continues to deplore the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in January 2003 of its intention to withdraw from the NPT. The EU will not cease to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle any clandestine nuclear weapons programme. The EU restates its firm resolve to contribute to the search for a peaceful solution, through negotiations, to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue and particularly welcomes the dialogue within the framework of the six-party talks. The EU looks forward to the fourth round of the six-party talks, as the parties agreed in June 2004.

We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come unconditionally into full compliance with all its relevant international commitments. It should comply in particular with its IAEA Safeguards Agreement under the NPT, as a first step, by allowing the re-establishment of the required containment and surveillance measures at its nuclear facilities and the full implementation of all the required safeguards measures at all times, including the return of IAEA inspectors.

The EU has warmly welcomed Libya's decision to eliminate all material, equipment and programmes which lead to the production of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The EU has also welcomed Libya's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and of its signature and decision to implement an Additional Protocol. The EU encourages Libya to continue its good cooperation with the IAEA and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in implementing its decision. The case of Libya demonstrates that the problems of proliferation can, with good will, be tackled through discussion and engagement, that countries can abandon programmes voluntarily and peacefully and that States have nothing to fear from coming forward and admitting non-compliance.

The EU attaches great importance to the development and strengthening, wherever possible, of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region. These zones enhance global and regional peace and security — urgently needed, as the present political environment indicates — and are a means to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, stability and confidence. We therefore welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear weapon States of the relevant protocols on nuclear-weapons-free zones following the completion of the necessary consultations.

The EU also underlines the importance of the concept of zones free of weapons of mass destruction, both nuclear and other, and their means of delivery, envisaged in Security Council resolution 687 (1991), on the Middle East. We call upon all States in the region to establish an effectively verifiable zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The EU believes the protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok that establishes the South East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone is close to conclusion. The EU welcomes the efforts of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and hopes that issues that we understand have been outstanding since late 2002 can be addressed and resolved quickly.

The EU appeals to the remaining States parties to the Treaty of Pelindaba which have yet to ratify the treaty in order to bring it into force to do so without delay.

The EU recognizes the continuing high value of the existing legally binding security assurances, as provided through the protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and through unilateral declarations by nuclear weapons States — noted by Security Council resolution 984 (1995) and reaffirmed at the sixth NPT Review Conference — to non-nuclear weapon States parties to the NPT on the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The EU Strategy on Weapons of Mass Destruction indicates that positive and negative security assurances can play an important role in the NPT regime. They can serve both as an incentive to forego the acquisition of WMD and as a deterrent. In our WMD Strategy, we are committed to promoting further consideration of Strategy assurances.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): I am taking the floor on behalf of the seven members of the New Agenda Coalition: Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Sweden.

On 4 October, in the general debate of this Committee (see A/C.1/59/PV.2), we presented our common assessment of the overall political situation with regard to nuclear disarmament. Later today, we will introduce our draft resolution under this agenda item. At this point, I would just like to make some additional remarks on a few nuclear issues which we consider essential.

The core of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is that non-nuclear-weapon States will not develop nuclear weapons, in return for which the nuclear weapon States will reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals; the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is accorded to all. The NPT must be upheld in its entirety. The commitments made within the framework of the NPT and its 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences require full implementation. We all need to enhance our efforts to make the treaty universal.

The agreement on nuclear disarmament at the 2000 NPT Review Conference included an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. A practical plan for progressive and systematic efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament was unanimously adopted. It remains to be implemented.

One of the most important commitments at the 2000 NPT Review Conference was to pursue the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the fact that three of the nuclear-weapon States have signed and ratified the Treaty and call upon the other two — and on other remaining key States — to do the same as a matter of priority. In the meantime, the moratoriums on nuclear testing and on nuclear explosive devices need to be upheld.

The next logical step in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process is to start negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, taking into account both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. Such negotiations are long overdue. Such a treaty would ban the production of enriched uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons, without hampering the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It would form a new cornerstone in the process of nuclear disarmament. It would impose restraints also on non-NPT parties — India, Israel and Pakistan — and, together with the CTBT, would go a long way towards upholding the NPT and strengthening the norms on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Until such a treaty is concluded, moratoriums on fissile material production need to be upheld.

We would like to see further reductions of nuclear weapons, including non-strategic nuclear weapons. As an interim measure, the operational status of nuclear weapons systems should be reduced. Thousands of nuclear weapons have yet to be eliminated. The Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty between Russia and the United States is a step in the right direction, but it does not require the destruction of those weapons and does not have any verification provisions. The process is neither irreversible nor transparent. As an important transparency measure, and to promote confidence, we continue to stress the importance of regular reporting by all nuclear-weapon States in the context of the NPT.

We also believe that our possibilities for addressing some of the current security concerns would be greatly advanced if the Conference on Disarmament could establish subsidiary bodies to deal with nuclear disarmament and with the prevention of an arms race in outer space, respectively.

Our support for nuclear-weapon-free zones remains as strong as ever. It is important that the nuclear-weapon States continue to uphold and reiterate their commitments with regard to security assurances pending the conclusion of legally binding security assurances for all non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

Mr. Trezza (Italy): I wish, first of all, to fully endorse the statement made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I also wish to refer to Ambassador Sander's statement at the 2nd meeting, during our general debate, in which he indicated, on behalf of the European Union, that one of the instruments for dealing with the threat of weapons of mass destruction is the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) initiative targeted at supporting disarmament and controlling and securing sensitive materials, facilities and expertise.

On 28 September Italy sponsored a seminar in Geneva on that initiative, which is gaining increasing attention within the international disarmament process. The seminar was a follow-up to a statement on the same subject made by my country at the Conference on Disarmament on 20 January and to a presentation made last April in the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), on the relevance of the CTR for the nuclear non-proliferation process. An official document was presented on that occasion.

I take the opportunity of this thematic debate to draw the attention of the Committee to this issue for the first time in a comprehensive manner. The CTR is one of the most significant developments that has taken place in the past few years in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. It involves a growing number of countries. It has been widely debated in the Group of Eight (G-8) and the EU and has received wide attention from disarmament scholars. However, it has rarely been discussed in multilateral disarmament forums. The CTR initiative was originally developed in the early 1990s and was inspired by Senators Nunn and Lugar of the United States. It refers to the process of international cooperation and assistance, through which a large number of nuclear warheads and delivery systems have been destroyed or deactivated and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) materials have been placed in safe storage. The CTR is particularly relevant to nuclear disarmament. That is why I am making this presentation under this cluster. However, the CTR also concerns other weapons of mass destruction: chemical, biological and radiological.

The implementation of disarmament commitments has brought to the international community's attention the fact that those commitments, be they multilateral, plurilateral or unilateral, are meaningless unless the weapons involved are either physically destroyed or appropriately disposed of. Over the years, the enormous technical and financial problems connected with the actual elimination of armaments, both conventional and non-conventional, have also come to the surface. The CTR is a multilateral effort aimed at addressing those problems.

Belarus, Canada, Kazakhstan, Japan, the European Union and many of its member States on the national level, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United States, Uzbekistan and other countries have worked together under the CTR initiative to secure, dismantle and safeguard weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and infrastructures.

The culminating moment of this initiative took place in Kananaskis, Canada, in June 2002, when the leaders of the G-8 announced a Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Participants at the Kananaskis Summit pledged to raise up to $20 billion over the following 10 years to address those threats and, in particular, to prevent terrorists or those who harbour them from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical, radiological and biological weapons or missiles and related materials equipment and technologies. In addition to those important financial pledges, the G-8 leaders agreed on a comprehensive set of non-proliferation principles, as well as on guidelines for implementation.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction programme has become one of the important instruments of the European Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The sum of €1.6 billion was cited at a conference in Strasbourg last year as the total past and future financial commitment of the European Union, notably within the Kananaskis commitments and an ad hoc action plan.

It is our belief that the time has come to present this concept to the First Committee. The essence of our message is that not only do we have to face the problem of negotiating disarmament agreements; we also have to deal with the additional problem of actually destroying those weapons. In some cases, this requires international cooperation, although the primary responsibility of countries for destruction and safety should remain unchanged.

We are not proposing at this stage an ad hoc resolution on this subject; we rather suggest a horizontal approach. We believe that the CTR concept should be reflected in certain relevant First Committee draft resolutions. I refer in particular to those dealing with weapons of mass destruction disarmament.

We have already approached, on a bilateral basis, some delegations that are sponsoring those draft resolutions and have drawn their attention to the relevance of the CTR process to their texts. I wish to thank them for their interest and for their initial positive response. The CTR also has significant environmental implications, since weapons elimination projects are to be implemented in an environmentally sound manner. This process might therefore also be of interest to sponsors of draft resolutions dealing with the link between disarmament and environmental standards.

I address the Committee not only to describe this new reality, but also to indicate our readiness to provide further explanations of this initiative and to propose additional language for future First Committee documents.

Mr. Mine (Japan): Before I introduce a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament later in this session, I would like to explain our basic view of nuclear disarmament. Recent challenges to the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), such as non-compliance and the proliferation of nuclear-related technology through underground nuclear proliferation networks, have highlighted the urgency of further efforts on the part of States parties to maintain and strengthen the NPT regime. The early peaceful resolution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue is essential for securing peace and stability in North-East Asia, including Japan, and also for strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Japan cannot, under any circumstances, accept any development, acquisition, possession, test or transfer of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We continue to call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to ensure complete dismantlement of all its nuclear programmes under credible and international verification. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should observe all the international agreements relating to nuclear issues, including the NPT. In order to resolve the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue, Japan is ready to continue to make every effort towards a resolution by diplomatic means, primarily by actively contributing to the six-party talks process.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, it is essential for Iran to sincerely implement all the requests made by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors in its resolutions since September 2003. It is indispensable that Iran remove the serious concerns of the international community through efforts to promote increased transparency. Japan sincerely hopes that the Iranian nuclear issue will be resolved, as soon as possible, through Iran's further efforts.

Japan welcomes Libya's decision to abandon all its weapons of mass destruction programmes. Japan sincerely hopes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and those States under suspicion of engaging in the development of weapons of mass destruction will follow Libya's example.

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing. Hence, both need to be promoted. Both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States must remain fully committed to their obligations and commitments under the NPT. With a view to achieving the universality of the Treaty, Japan again calls upon States not parties to the NPT to accede to it as non-nuclear-weapon States, without conditions and without delay.

The ongoing challenges to the NPT regime mean that the 2005 NPT Review Conference has special significance. Japan very much appreciates Ambassador Duarte's tireless efforts in preparing for the Review Conference. In the light of the current international situation, issues concerning nuclear non-proliferation are likely to be the main focus of the Conference. Nevertheless, nuclear-weapon States continue to bear a heavy responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime.

I would like to emphasize the following points as States parties prepare for the forthcoming Review Conference. Firstly, it is important to set clear objectives for the 2005 Review Conference, as it will be held under circumstances and conditions that differ from those that pertained at the 1995 and 2000 Review

Conferences. Secondly, it is imperative to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty before the 2005 Review Conference, as that would make a positive contribution to the strengthening of the NPT regime. Thirdly, it is important to consider effective measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons or related materials.

Japan attaches great importance to certain specific measures with a view to maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime, such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the universalization of the International Atomic Energy Agency's additional protocol, disarmament and non-proliferation education and measures to deal with non-compliance. Japan will work together with other States parties to contribute to reaching consensus on such specific measures.

The CTBT is one of the major pillars of the NPT regime. Japan places great importance on its early entry into force, and has been making various contributions to that end. The number of countries which have ratified the CTBT has been steadily increasing. Japan welcomes the ratification by the Democratic Republic of the Congo — one of the countries whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty's entry into force. Japan calls upon the remaining 11 countries to follow suit.

Japan, together with Australia, Finland and the Netherlands, hosted the second "Friends of the CTBT" meeting last month here in New York. A joint ministerial statement was issued, calling upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. A moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions should be continued, pending the entry into force of the Treaty.

Japan continues to attach the utmost importance to the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and welcomes the reaffirmation by the United States of its support for that project. Japan believes that the time is right for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and that we should therefore harness the momentum and commence negotiations early next year, prior to the start of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. All related work should be devoted to that end, and differing views among member States should be dealt with in the course of the negotiations.

One effective means of strengthening nuclear non-proliferation is to promote the universality of the IAEA additional protocol. The number of countries which have signed or ratified a protocol has been increasing. Japan has made various contributions to that end and will continue to do so.

Japan welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions and hopes for the full implementation of the Treaty by both States. Japan also welcomes the submission by Russia and the United States of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.56, entitled "Bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions and the new strategic framework". Japan continues to urge all nuclear-weapon States to implement concrete nuclear disarmament measures and to keep other States informed of the progress made.

Mr. Ayalogu (Nigeria): This year marks the twenty-sixth anniversary of the tenth special session of the General Assembly — the first devoted to disarmament — at which Member States agreed that nuclear weapons posed the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. The evidence of the danger posed by nuclear weapons was demonstrated by the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which killed over 160,000 people immediately, while at least 50,000 others died later as a result of its radioactive effects.

The Hiroshima bomb had a yield of just 12.5 kilotons. As compared with just three atomic bombs possessed by one State in 1945, the nuclear reality today is that there are over 16,500 nuclear weapons and more than 36,000 nuclear warheads in the hands of five nuclear Powers, not including other nuclear States. Two new States have acquired nuclear weapons every decade since the end of the Second World War. The total stockpile amounts to about 12 billion tons of trinitrotoluene (TNT), which would yield an explosion of about 12,000 megatons; the collective yield and destructive capacity of those nuclear weapons would be equivalent to that of approximately 1 million Hiroshima bombs. Studies by experts have revealed that if those nuclear arsenals, or even a fraction thereof, were to be unleashed in warfare, human civilization as we know it today would be totally annihilated.

That is why nuclear weapons continue to be an issue of grave concern to the international community, including my delegation. For this reason, the need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In our general statement last week, at the 8th meeting, we referred to this challenge as one that can be tackled only through the demonstration of the necessary political will. This is a vital requirement for the realization of our ultimate objective of achieving nuclear disarmament. It involves readiness on the part of the nuclear-weapon States to immediately stop the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. Once that has been achieved, the next step should be the commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to the early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and their total elimination. A draft resolution to that effect should be adopted by this Committee as proof of our preparedness to match our words with deeds and to embark on a process of negotiating a convention to ban nuclear weapons. At the same time, it is necessary to stress that any nuclear disarmament process must be irreversible, transparent and verifiable if it is to be meaningful.

The need to face up to this challenge is in keeping with the resolve demonstrated at the Millennium Summit, as expressed in the Millennium Declaration, to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open with a view to achieving that aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear danger.

Pending the total elimination of those weapons, Member States should agree on the establishment of a legally binding international instrument under which the nuclear-weapon States will undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Nigeria firmly believes that nuclear non-proliferation can be meaningfully sustained only if non-nuclear-weapon States that have renounced the development or possession of nuclear weapons are themselves assured, under legally binding agreement, against the use or threat of use of such weapons. By transforming the disparate assurances declared by the nuclear Powers into a unified, legally binding obligation, the nuclear Powers would not only be fulfilling part of their commitments towards those States but also reinforcing the non-proliferation regime against possible future setbacks.

Nigeria wishes to reaffirm its belief in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. We endorse the 13 practical steps adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference towards systematic and progressive efforts to implement the unequivocal commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI. The International Court of Justice reinforced that principle in 1996 in its advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

In line with the final document of the 13th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 25 February last year, Nigeria wishes to reiterate its longstanding position in favour of the total elimination of all nuclear testing. We stress the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. We therefore call upon all States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty to do so as soon as possible so that the Treaty can enter into force without further delay. Pending its entry into force, it is important to maintain the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions.

Nigeria acknowledges the importance of bilateral efforts by the two major nuclear Powers in setting in motion the process of reducing strategic offensive nuclear weapons as a positive step towards nuclear disarmament. My delegation, however, shares the view of the vast majority of Member States that a reduction in deployments and in operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of, nuclear weapons. Of equal significance is the need for such efforts to be as transparent as possible.

Nigeria wishes to emphasize the importance of strengthening existing multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements by ensuring their effective implementation through full compliance with their provisions, as well as the need for their universality. The universalization of, and full compliance with, these multilateral instruments — particularly those relating to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction — remain the surest way of guaranteeing that such weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists, as called for by resolution 1540 (2004) of the Security Council.

The Nigerian delegation recognizes that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) was a turning point in the history of multilateral efforts to achieve disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. It is regrettable that the Final Document of SSOD I has not been implemented 26 years after its adoption. The Nigerian delegation wishes to stress the need to convene SSOD IV in order to give real meaning to the nuclear disarmament process. Consequently, we call upon Member States to adopt a resolution at this session to convene an open-ended working group to prepare for SSOD IV. It is heartening to note that a draft resolution to this effect has been submitted for consideration by the Committee.

My delegation expresses its strong belief in the need to strengthen the existing disarmament machinery in order to advance the process of nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we express regret that, for yet another year, the Conference on Disarmament has failed both to establish a subsidiary body to deal with the issue of nuclear disarmament and to commence negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, as agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. As already stated during the general debate last week, Nigeria reiterates its full support for the Five Ambassadors' (A5) proposal as a mechanism for breaking the existing impasse in reaching a work programme for the Conference on Disarmament. Nigeria also believes that the fissile material cut-off treaty is due for negotiation, but that, for the outcome to be meaningful, it should contain a reliable verification mechanism that should not exclude existing stockpiles. It is our hope that the Conference on Disarmament will begin substantive work on these issues as soon as possible.

Mr. Lew (Republic of Korea): The importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime cannot be overemphasized. At this trying time, the NPT is the focus of particular attention on the part of global society, as it faces multiple and daunting challenges. The challenges are attributable to its inherent structural shortfalls as well as to the problem of confronting non-compliance cases. These challenges require serious and creative discussions on ways and means to squarely address the problem at the Review Conference next year.

The disappointing outcome of the third Preparatory Committee of the NPT last May does not allow us any modicum of optimism as to next year's Review Conference. However, given the fact that the States parties to the NPT achieved, against all odds, a remarkable outcome during the previous Review Conference, my delegation has high expectations of further success next year. We believe that it is high time to reaffirm our resolve to preserve and strengthen the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. As the thirty-ninth adherent to the Additional Protocol, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Additional Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

The Republic of Korea has joined the vigorous efforts of the international community to facilitate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have reaffirmed our strong support for the CTBT by subscribing to the joint ministerial statement signed in New York last month. We view the CTBT as an indispensable pillar of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and a logically essential factor in attaining the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

While we welcome the progress made so far — 173 countries have signed the Treaty and 33 annex II countries have ratified it — we urge those countries which still need to sign or ratify the Treaty to heed the appeals of the international community without further delay.

It is well known that the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the early conclusion of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We believe that an effective fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would greatly contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We strongly support the early commencement of FMCT negotiations next year.

Ms. Pollack (Canada): As we noted during our opening statement, the universal nature of the membership of the First Committee on disarmament and international security gives a unique status to its discussions and decisions. It is only here that all States can debate an issue that remains a fundamental objective of the international community and to which all States have, in this forum, committed themselves.

It is here in the First Committee that States can discuss their responsibilities in the light of those commitments and recount to the international community both individual and collective achievements. Here, also, during this debate, we have an opportunity to define the work that remains to be done.

In his statement at the 5th meeting of the General Assembly, last month, the Prime Minister of Canada reaffirmed our country's long-standing position that non-proliferation and disarmament remain fundamental pillars of the commitment of the United Nations to international peace and security.

Canada maintains the view that there is no substitute for the basic norms and commitments embodied in the multilateral structure whose cornerstone is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The 2005 NPT Review Conference is only months away. We must be well prepared to address the challenges the Treaty now faces, and must ensure that our deliberations leading up to the Conference position us for work that will not only strengthen the NPT's basic aims, but also ensure that its processes are reinforced to withstand future challenges.

In that regard, Canada has advocated overcoming the Treaty's institutional deficit, through annual meetings, a standing Bureau and provision for extraordinary meetings, should the need occur. This will give NPT States parties greater ownership of their Treaty and provide us with a key tool in overseeing its implementation and more effectively addressing challenges to its authority and integrity. We look forward to its adoption at next May's Review Conference.

We cannot risk weakening the NPT's ability to ensure that all its pillars are not undermined. The NPT review process is an invaluable tool assisting the Treaty's more effective implementation that has, itself, been strengthened since 1995, when the Treaty was extended indefinitely, with the bargain of permanence with accountability. Canada has focused on encouraging transparency, such as enhancing reporting, one of the 13 steps from the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which contributes to achieving the NPT's implementation.

The First Committee will debate draft resolutions that strive to elaborate key disarmament steps that have been developed to support and strengthen the NPT. Some of those steps are legal mechanisms already negotiated by the international community, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). While the CTBT's membership steadily grows with each ratification, and while its international monitoring system has been built up steadily into a modern verification regime with global reach, the Treaty's legal entry into force remains frustratingly out of reach. We welcome the appointment of the Special Representative, Ambassador Ramaker, and we urge those 11 States whose ratification is needed for entry into force to find the political will to work within the CTBT to ensure its effectiveness and implementation.

Other disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms, such as a fissile material cut-off treaty, remain to be negotiated. Some, like the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) additional protocols, have been established to keep pace with technology and to make non-proliferation safeguards more effective.

While we continue to work to reinforce the NPT and its supporting structure, we cannot lose sight of one of our basic objectives: namely, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The integrity and viability of the NPT depend on continuing strong momentum in nuclear weapons reductions. There can be no going back to the nuclear arms race of the twentieth century. We encourage the nuclear-weapon States to securely reduce and dismantle their nuclear weapon arsenals in an irreversible and verifiable manner. We continue to call on those States outside the Treaty to join as non-nuclear-weapon States.

The international community is currently faced with a number of disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. We expect this Committee to discuss how all States can fully implement universal disarmament and non-proliferation norms and propose practical options so that the obligations and undertakings of States can be carried out. We must seriously reflect on how to better address these challenges, such as non-compliance, and how to strengthen in a comprehensive manner the NPT's implementation.

One such option remains resumption of work in the sole international body charged with negotiating disarmament instruments. In his statement, Canada's Prime Minister recalled the United Nations "responsibility to deny" (*A/59/PV.5, p. 31*). He called on the Conference on Disarmament, charged with the responsibility for negotiating new multilateral instruments, to get back to productive work. We look forward to returning to work in the Conference on Disarmament and strongly urge member States to adopt a programme of work based on the balanced proposal that has been before that body for over a year. We will introduce a related draft resolution later in this session.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): Next year's Review Conference Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will have the task of setting the future nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. Australia is convinced that a strong and effective NPT is essential to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, to further progress towards nuclear disarmament and to retain the climate of confidence necessary for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We are committed to working with others to address the serious challenges faced by the Treaty. Events since we last met have confirmed that existing NPT verification is insufficient to stop determined proliferators. There should be no doubt that the International Atomic Energy Agency additional protocol, together with the comprehensive safeguards agreement, is the NPT safeguards verification standard required for NPT non-nuclear-weapon States. NPT parties should take a decision to that effect at next year's Review Conference.

The risk of NPT parties misusing the Treaty's peaceful nuclear energy provisions in order to acquire the technical basis for a rapid breakout to nuclear weapons is a serious matter for the international community. The Review Conference will need to take forward the international dialogue on ways to limit the spread of sensitive nuclear technology. As noted in our general debate statement at the 2nd meeting, this is not a question of reinterpreting the NPT, but of ensuring that actions by NPT parties are true to the Treaty's intent and to the global non-proliferation norm.

We should be clear about what is at stake. The non-proliferation regime provides vital security benefits. But more than that, dealing with nuclear proliferation is fundamental to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It is simply not possible to conceive of a world free of nuclear weapons in the absence of complete and permanent assurances of nuclear non-proliferation.

Australia remains strongly committed to progress on nuclear disarmament and is pleased again to be a sponsor of Japan's draft resolution entitled "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons" (A/C.1/59/L.23).

We strongly support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and are actively pursuing further signatures and ratifications. Along with Japan, Finland and the Netherlands, we were pleased earlier in this session to convene a joint ministerial meeting which underscored that support for the CTBT remains widespread and resolute. Australia is pleased also to be the lead sponsor, with Mexico and New Zealand, of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.25, on the CTBT. We hope that draft resolution will again attract overwhelming support.

We remain of the view that a fissile material cut-off treaty would significantly advance global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals. We stand ready to work to achieve a start to negotiations and to ensure an effective cut-off treaty, including appropriate verification.

In this Committee, we must ensure our efforts are focused on making a practical contribution to the international community's efforts to progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Australia looks forward to joining with other delegations in supporting draft resolutions that serve this purpose.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With the end of the cold war and changes in the nature of relations between Russia and the United States, the threat of global nuclear war has substantially decreased, and the bilateral nuclear arms race has become a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, the world has not become safer. Against the backdrop of a restructuring of the former bipolar world order, regional conflicts and problems of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including nuclear weapons, have now moved to centre stage. In the twenty-first century, we have also witnessed the emergence of new global threats and challenges — above all, international terrorism.

In these complex circumstances, the Russian Federation considers it to be of fundamental importance that States implement existing international obligations. Renouncing them unilaterally, without agreeing with all interested States on new rules of the game — particularly in the area of international security — would be a direct route to upheaval and instability, with the constant emergence and escalation of new threats to the security of all States without exception.

Consonant with it commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Russia reaffirms its dedication to the ultimate objective of complete nuclear disarmament. However, that goal must be achieved through a comprehensive, step-by-step approach and in compliance with the principle of the equal security of all States.

Despite the trend towards varying stances in the overall area of nuclear disarmament, significant progress has been made in recent years. The world's nuclear arsenal has been substantially reduced. The Russian Federation reaffirms, not just in words but through its actions, its determination to fully implement its commitments in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In April and May of this year, at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, we once again submitted detailed information in that respect.

Here, let me describe some of the most important activities in that regard. December 2001 brought the conclusion of the period for the reduction of strategic offensive weapons under Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms (START I). At that point, the total number of nuclear-weapon delivery vehicles of the United States and Russia had been reduced by a factor of 1.5 with respect to their number in 1991, when the Treaty was signed. Further, the number of nuclear warheads had been reduced by a factor of approximately 1.7. Russia fully — and ahead of the deadline — carried out its commitments for those reductions. By the deadline of 5 December 2001, Russia had for practical purposes reduced the number of its deployed strategic delivery vehicles of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and heavy bombers to 1,136 units and the number of nuclear weapons for those vehicles to 5,518. Along with other verification mechanisms, the START I treaty will remain in force until at least December 2009.

Even after December 2001, Russia continued to reduce the number of its nuclear weapons. In 2003 alone, reductions in warheads for ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers deployed by Russia numbered 458 units. At present, Russia has eliminated a total of 1,250 ICBM and SLBM launchers, 43 strategic nuclear submarines and 65 heavy bombers.

As is well known, in May 2000, Russia ratified the START II treaty. We are not to blame for its not having entered into force. Nevertheless, any gap in the further reduction of strategic offensive arms, as set out in legally binding treaties, has so far been avoided. In May 2002, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, known as the Moscow Treaty, was signed; it entered into force in June 2003. The Moscow Treaty legally enshrined the Russian-American agreement to mutually reduce by the end of 2012 their aggregate number of strategic nuclear warheads to one third of the levels established by the START I Treaty.

Russia was prepared to agree to even more dramatic reductions. Under the new Treaty, further enrichment, strengthening and development its provisions will be considered by a bilateral implementation commission, to be established for that purpose. The Moscow Treaty, like all agreements, was the result of mutual compromise and was possible largely thanks to the new strategic relationship between Russia and the United States, which is enshrined in the joint declaration adopted at the May 2002 Moscow Summit and thanks to the parties' reaffirmation of the close links between strategic offensive and defensive weapons.

Thus, there are clear prospects for further progress towards nuclear disarmament through 2012. It is also important that, at least through 2009, the strategic offensive capacities of Russia and the United States will be under the dual and mutually complementary restriction of two treaties: START I and the Moscow Treaty.

There has also been significant progress in the reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons. I recall that, in accordance with the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles (INF Treaty), all land-based missiles of those two classes with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres were destroyed, and their further production and testing was banned. Compliance with INF Treaty continues.

Russia, for practical purposes, has implemented the measures that it undertook in the framework of its 1991-1992 unilateral disarmament initiatives regarding non-strategic nuclear weapons, with the exception of the elimination of nuclear warheads of land forces. The process of destroying nuclear warheads for tactical land-based missiles, nuclear artillery shells and nuclear mines is being carried out through the technological capacity of nuclear arms enterprises and with realistic funding levels.

Through laborious and complex operations, all former Soviet nuclear weapons were moved to the territory of Russia. Over the last few years, nuclear weapons stockpiles have been reduced to one-fifth their former number, and the number of storage units for nuclear warheads have been reduced to one-fourth their former number. All strategic nuclear warheads are now located in the central storage sites of the Ministry of Defence. That enables us to concentrate financial resources on nuclear security and reliable storage for nuclear warheads, through the use of modern techniques for storage, protection and preservation.

I would like once again to draw the Committee's attention to the Russian proposal for all nuclear weapons to be moved to the territory of the nuclear State to which they belong. That measure would enhance confidence in safety and security.

The danger attributed to non-strategic nuclear weapons is often groundlessly exaggerated, as are qualitative assessments of stockpiles. All nuclear weapons are equally dangerous. Tactical nuclear weapons, like other nuclear weapons, are part of a complex system that is protected from accidental and unintended use. There has never been a breakdown in the reliable protection and storage of nuclear weapons in Russia. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Russian Federation has taken important additional measures to ensure highly reliable security for the storage and handling of nuclear weapons. Everything has been done to prevent unauthorized access, including tight restrictions on the relevant information. Russia's responsible position on improving security for the storage and transportation of nuclear weapons could be noted in the special exercises carried out in Russia this year with the participation of 49 observers from 17 States. Those exercises were unprecedented in their openness. We hope that other nuclear-weapon countries will respond by taking similar measures.

Russia has carried out the process of reducing its nuclear arsenals, including those of non-strategic nuclear weapons, in a systematic and consistent fashion, under a targeted federal programme for the elimination and disposal of nuclear warheads. Russia shares the view of many States that the reduction of nuclear weapons must be irreversible. In that context, I would like to note that our nuclear disarmament measures have been accompanied by corresponding reductions in Russia's nuclear weapons sector and arms sector. Thus, we have more than halved our capacity to produce weapons beyond those necessary for defence purposes.

Since 1990, the number of staff members working on defence-related projects in nuclear facilities of the Russian Federation has been reduced by a factor of 1.5. In cooperation with the United States, we are working to halt the operation of Russian uranium-lead reactors, which produce weaponized plutonium. Material they produce in Russia is not used for military purposes; the production of uranium in Russia for nuclear-weapon purposes was halted a long time ago.

Russia has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which we consider to be an important multilateral instrument in the area of restricting nuclear weapons and nuclear non-proliferation. At the same time, we continue to have serious concerns regarding the future of the Treaty. We are convinced that efforts to ensure its entry into force must not flag. We call on the States on which entry into force depends immediately and unconditionally to do everything possible to that end. Thus, it is of fundamental importance that until the CTBT enters into force, States should continue to comply with the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions and all other types of nuclear explosions.

As Russia's experience has shown, nuclear disarmament — including the removal of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery from operational readiness, their elimination and their disposal — often turns out to be more expensive than the creation of those weapons. We could hardly agree with any assertion to the contrary. Here, we pay tribute to cooperation in the elimination and disposal of nuclear weapons, in which we are engaged with the United States and other States.

Moreover, we must keep in mind that the Russian Federation continues to bear the main burden of financing the elimination of its own nuclear weapons; outside assistance enables us to palpably speed up the process. For example, in one of the most costly areas of nuclear disarmament — the disposal of nuclear submarines — in which we are actively cooperating with our foreign partners, the Russian Federation's share of the expenditures amounts to three fourths of the total.

The process of nuclear disarmament does not take place in a vacuum. In considering the future prospects of that process, we cannot ignore the security interests of the nuclear-weapon States themselves. It is not fortuitous, for example, that the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference states that new steps in the area of nuclear disarmament must be carried out, "in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all" (*NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Part I), Article VI, para. 15 (9)*).

The pace and form of Russia's future steps in the area of nuclear disarmament, cannot fail to be influenced by trends in the geo-political situation, by the state of strategic security, by the way our partners take account, in practical terms, of the security interests of the Russian Federation, by the financial and economic capacity of countries and by a number of other factors.

Nuclear disarmament, including reductions in non-strategic nuclear weapons, cannot be carried out in isolation from factors such as: the situation relating to other kinds of weapons; world political developments, especially in Europe; the need to ensure international stability; and the development and expansion of military-political alliances. For that reason, we consider it unrealistic to artificially increase the pace of nuclear disarmament or to demand the imposition of rigid timetables and deadlines. The Russian Federation is ready, in accordance with the obligations it has undertaken, to follow the path of nuclear disarmament in strengthening the framework of nuclear non-proliferation. The Russian Federation will continue to support realistic and balanced decisions to that end.

The Conference on Disarmament can play an important role here, for example, through its negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

At the present session of the General Assembly, the Russian Federation, together with the United States of America, is submitting for consideration by the First Committee a draft resolution on bilateral strategic nuclear arms and the new strategic framework (A/C.1/59/L.56). It is our intention to make a statement to introduce the draft resolution, and, in that connection, we would like to reserve the possibility of returning to the subject of nuclear disarmament at a later stage of our thematic discussion.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): Fundamentally, the United States supports the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a ban, in the form of a legally-binding fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. As many members know, I announced the results of the United States review of such a cut-off treaty in a speech on 29 July, at a plenary meeting of the Conference. Our experts in Washington put a considerable amount of thought into the review. As a result of the review, the United States believes that an FMCT cannot be verified effectively.

The United States sent a team of verification experts to Geneva last month to brief on how we reached that conclusion. The nature of an FMCT imposes significant practical limits on its verification. An FMCT would ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, while allowing production for other activities not subject to an FMCT. Under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), finding undeclared fissile material in a State under safeguards is sufficient to make a judgement of non-compliance. However, simply finding fissile material not declared under an FMCT would be insufficient to make a judgement of non-compliance. It would be only the starting point, really, given that both date of production and purpose of production would then have to be proven.

The United States has maintained a moratorium on the production of fissile material for weapons purposes for more than 15 years. While other Governments have announced their own suspension of production, the moratorium is far from universal. The United States believes that fruitlessly negotiating verification procedures would delay unnecessarily the creation of a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices. It is imperative for an FMCT to be negotiated while it could still be relevant. The objective of an FMCT is not its verification, but the creation of an observed norm against the production of fissile material intended for weapons.

Faced with those issues and other problems that our experts detailed in Geneva, we must rethink how to approach an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament. In considering this year's First Committee draft resolution on this subject, we must all ask whether the overall result will promote prospects for getting an FMCT in place or damage them.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated States Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the international disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation system. As a universal instrument, the NPT stipulates various obligations that are legally binding on nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. The Treaty is based upon a delicate balance of rights and obligations. The nuclear-weapon States commit themselves to adopting, in good faith, effective nuclear disarmament measures, and to not transfer to any other State nuclear weapons or other such assets. The non-nuclear weapons States, for their part, pledge not to acquire nuclear weapons and to accept safeguards, without prejudice to their right to develop and use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes.

Those rights and obligations are clearly spelled out in the Treaty. However, signals are now being sent inclining us to think that some countries may be seeking to reinterpret them. Ideas and proposals in that vein are unacceptable and contradict the spirit and the letter of the NPT.

As States that have foregone the nuclear option and as parties to the world's first nuclear-weapons-free zone, we continue our determined appeal for strict observance of all the obligations set out in the NPT and of the commitments agreed upon at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences. In particular, we reaffirm the need for full implementation of the 13 steps agreed to in 2000.

In the view of the expanded MERCOSUR, disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin. Without a multilateral process of transparent, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, we will not be able to avoid the dangers of nuclear proliferation.

In that connection, we emphasize the need to comply with the disarmament obligations envisaged under article VI of the NPT, and to honour the inalienable right, set out in article IV, of all States to engage in researching, producing and using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and to receive transfers of material, equipment and scientific and technological information for such purposes.

The prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that those weapons will not fall into the hands of terrorists. Thus, with solid credentials in the field of non-proliferation, our countries will continue to participate constructively in the discussions that it is hoped will lead to the irreversible process of nuclear disarmament. Only a comprehensive plan that includes elements of disarmament, verification, assistance and cooperation can guarantee the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Here, allow me to say that we, the member countries of the expanded MERCOSUR, will be active participants in the seventh NPT Review Conference, cooperating with Ambassador Sergio Duarte, President-elect of the Conference, to ensure the success of its work. In terms of the outcome, in our view the final document of the seventh Review Conference must contain specific commitments that will enable us to preserve the NPT's balance of rights and obligations.

As regards the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the expanded MERCOSUR was the first subregion whose members formally became parties to the CTBT, reflecting the historic commitment of our countries to further develop mechanisms and instruments in the areas of non-proliferation of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction.

As everyone knows, the CTBT is an instrument of particular importance in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As an integral part of the commitments that in 1995 made the indefinite extension of the NPT possible, the entry into force of the CTBT would free the world from nuclear testing, contributing in that way to the systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear arms, as well as to preventing and combating nuclear proliferation. We have made major strides along those lines. Today, the CTBT enjoys almost universal membership, with 173 States signatories and ratification by 119 States. As will be recalled, a key prerequisite for the entry into force of the Treaty is ratification by 44 designated States. Unfortunately, 11 of those still have not moved to ratify it.

We urge all States that have not already done so, in particular those States listed in annex II to the Treaty, to sign or ratify the CTBT — whichever applies — so that the Treaty can enter into force as soon as possible. Those countries need to make their intentions with regard to the Treaty extremely clear. Launching an international monitoring system without a clear prospect for the entry into force of the CTBT would create a paradox: an international monitoring system cannot operate without the entry of force of the legal obligations that it is supposed to monitor. The initialization of the international monitoring system must not be hastened for purely technical reasons that fail to take into account the universal and non-discriminatory nature of the Treaty that created the system. We note with satisfaction efforts to identify measures to promote the entry into force of the Treaty. The Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty are important steps in that regard.

The countries of the expanded MERCOSUR, while affirming their readiness to promote universal accession to the CTBT, declare their keen support for the maintenance of the moratorium on nuclear testing until the CTBT can enter into force.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased that the plan to hold substantive thematic interactive debates has finally become a reality with today's debate on nuclear weapons. This is unquestionably an excellent way to provide sorely needed momentum in the work of our Committee.

Allow me, as an introduction to the debate, to make a few general comments. For my country, disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are inextricably and indivisibly linked. Verifiable and irreversible nuclear arms reductions are an integral part of our non-proliferation efforts. How can we strengthen non-proliferation when there are still countries that continue to possess nuclear weapons and refuse to ratify international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements?

Moreover, the increased risk of nuclear proliferation — a question that I took up in greater detail during the general debate — is connected to the fact that some nuclear-weapon States continue to develop their nuclear capacities and/or remain outside the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Indeed, the recent discovery of a black market in nuclear weapons components and technologies has clearly highlighted that the most dangerous source of supply can be found in countries that have shirked the obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The existence of a black market in nuclear weapons components and technologies is even more disturbing in that it opens the possibility of access to such materials by terrorist groups. In that regard, we welcome Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). My country also supports the efforts undertaken to that end by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Finally, Switzerland hails the Group of eight (G-8) Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, in which it participates, as well as the Proliferation Security Initiative.

In order to make concrete progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, there is a need to preserve and bolster the gains achieved and to begin preparation for subsequent stages. Concerning those gains, we must to step up efforts to ensure the universalization of the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I cannot stress enough the importance of the upcoming 2005 Review Conference.

Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen the IAEA verification and monitoring system, in particular with regard to the ban on and struggle against black markets in nuclear components and technology, as well as for non-proliferation in general.

Finally, there is a need to begin without delay the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the existing mandate. In that regard, my country is not convinced by the argument that such a treaty would not be susceptible to effective verification. The issue of verification must be an integral part of the negotiations.

Regarding the subsequent stages, given that existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agreements are far from sufficient, we must, first of all, redouble our efforts to formulate new agreements and protocols in this area. Next, we must push for the entry into force and implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is of urgent importance for international security. We also need to take more seriously the danger that non-State actors may acquire access to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons and radioactive materials, and agree on appropriate action in that regard.

The Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions is a very positive step here, but we must prompt nuclear-weapon States to make greater efforts to reduce and, indeed, to totally eliminate such weapons, while at the same time implementing measures that will progressively reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their military strategies and doctrines. Finally, nuclear-weapon States must immediately halt their research and development on new generations of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I am taking the floor to address some issues of particular concern to my delegation.

My delegation expresses once again its concern at the threat to humanity stemming from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) requires nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the parties reaffirmed their obligation to undertake unequivocally the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. However, we see that, in reality, nuclear-weapon States did not take that obligation seriously. Accordingly, many States in the rest of the world are hesitant to strengthen the enforcement of non-proliferation because they believe that the nuclear-weapon States are not committed to disarmament. Furthermore, some States that have given up their nuclear programmes are particularly frustrated.

Like it or not, the nuclear-weapon States must address the disarmament issue more directly than they have in the past. By complying with their political obligations under the NPT, nuclear-weapon States will bring greater leverage to their efforts to convince others to accept and enforce tougher non-proliferation rules.

We are increasingly worried by recent developments, as we see that some nuclear-weapon States are now developing new types of nuclear weapons. That effort is contrary to their obligations under the NPT, which calls for nuclear-weapon States to work to reduce their arsenals to zero. The idea of developing new types of nuclear weapons is completely against the provisions of the NPT. More important, it would spur a new global arms race.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nuclear disarmament and international security are closely linked. The survival of humankind depends on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. However, there are attempts to replace nuclear disarmament with the issue of horizontal proliferation. Some States are seeking to impose an approach that seems to treat non-proliferation as an end in itself, when, in fact, it must be viewed as a contribution to the efforts to achieve the ultimate objective of disarmament.

Although many years have passed since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force, not only have we failed to attain the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, but we are witnessing a very disturbing movement backwards, including efforts to develop new kinds of nuclear weapons. It is clear that some nuclear Powers do not have the political will necessary to attain the goal of the elimination and prohibition of those weapons once and for all. It is unacceptable that there is a lack of progress towards compliance with the unequivocal commitment to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The outcome document of the seventh NPT Review Conference, to be held in 2005, must contain practical commitments that clearly reflect the responsibilities and the role of nuclear-weapon States in the nuclear disarmament process, which must be transparent, verifiable and irreversible.

Cuba rejects the selective application of the NPT. Issues concerning nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot be put off forever as we focus on horizontal proliferation. Until universal nuclear disarmament is achieved, effective agreements are needed to guarantee the security of non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The unilateral declarations of nuclear-weapon States in 1995 are clearly inadequate, particularly in the light of various developments since them. With respect to the guarantees given under additional protocols to the treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, the experience of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, for example, shows clearly that those guarantees have not been sufficient either. For that reason, Cuba strongly supports the creation at the 2005 NPT Review Conference of a subsidiary body to deal in depth with security guarantees. We cannot continue to delay concluding a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security guarantees for non-nuclear weapon States, such as my country.

Cuba shares concerns about the threat of links being forged between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and fully supports legitimate international efforts, based on full respect for international law and the United Nations Charter, to prevent terrorists from acquiring such weapons. The possibility of terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, cannot be eliminated by taking a selective approach limited to fighting horizontal proliferation and ignoring vertical proliferation and disarmament. A multilateral, non-discriminatory approach is the only truly effective way to fight the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists and by States. The prohibition and the total elimination of those weapons, in particular nuclear weapons, is the only real guarantee against the use or the threat of use of such weapons.

Mr. Gumbi (South Africa): The threat posed by nuclear weapons is real, and few would disagree that the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used represents a continued risk to humanity. We must therefore guard against talking about nuclear weapons as purely inanimate objects, reciting numbers growing or numbers diminishing.

It is accepted that the only guarantee against the use of such weapons is their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. However, the onus to effect nuclear disarmament — that is to say, to get rid of nuclear weapons — rests primarily on those States that possess such weapons.

The longer nuclear weapons exist, the longer the world will have to wait to be free from the use or threat of use of such weapons and the longer fears will persist that such weapons could also fall into the wrong hands. South Africa believes that ignoring the interrelationship between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation would be at our own peril. Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing processes that will require continuous and irreversible progress on both fronts. In addition, it has been agreed that nuclear disarmament is not part of some ultimate objective, but is rather a milestone to be reached on the way to the real objective of the disarmament process, namely, general and complete disarmament.

In South Africa's view, there can be no doubt that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the foundation of nuclear disarmament. The consensus agreement at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT on the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament — to which all States parties are committed — was intended to be only a first step in that process. To fulfil their obligations under the Treaty, both the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States were to implement practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

If we fail to ensure that the agreements reached are implemented and fulfilled, the danger exists that the Treaty will continue to follow a circular path of continuous attempts to reach agreements again and again on issues that have been agreed upon and dealt with previously. The first stark example of that practice comprises the 1995 and 2000 agreements calling for signatures, ratifications and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which must now be promoted again. The second example comprises the 1990, 1995 and 2000 agreements on security assurances, which also must now be promoted again.

South Africa continues to believe that multilaterally negotiated, legally binding security assurances must be given by the nuclear-weapon States to all non-nuclear-weapon States. That will be pursued at the 2005 NPT Review Conference in the context of working papers on security assurances circulated at Preparatory Committee meetings. South Africa therefore strongly supports the establishment of a subsidiary body at the 2005 Review Conference to give particular attention to this issue. However, pending the conclusion of negotiations on security assurances, the nuclear-weapon States should fully respect their existing commitments in that regard.

The Treaty must be implemented in all its aspects without favour or prejudice. It is not prudent to hold onto any privilege or favour to the detriment of the Treaty as a whole. No aspect should be allowed to lag behind any other. No aspect should be more strictly enforced or should require stricter implementation than any other. As a multilateral instrument that was negotiated and equally agreed to by the members of the international community, the Treaty must be implemented equally in all its aspects.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. Cynkin (United States of America): As members are aware, some argue that there is a question concerning compliance by the nuclear-weapon States with Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With regard to the United States, any such suggestion is both unjust and untrue. Many members of the Committee were present last spring when Mr. Stephen Rademaker, United States Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, briefed the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT about United States actions in compliance with Article VI, and I would like to follow up on those remarks.

The United States has dismantled more than 13,000 nuclear weapons since 1988. Worldwide, we have withdrawn from active service more than 3,000 tactical nuclear warheads, consisting of artillery shells, warheads for short-range missile systems and navy depth bombs. We dismantled the last of those 3,000 warheads in the year 2003. By doing that, we eliminated nearly 90 per cent of our non-strategic nuclear weapons.

With regard to strategic weapons, the United States has eliminated more than 1,000 strategic nuclear missiles, and strategic reductions will continue as set forth in the Moscow Treaty. Once the Moscow Treaty reductions have been completed, in the year 2012, the United States will have reduced by approximately 80 per cent the strategic nuclear weapons that we had deployed in 1991.

Reductions in the number of operationally deployed weapons have paved the way for a major reduction, announced earlier this year by the National Nuclear Security Administration, in the size of the total United States nuclear stockpile. And, by 2012, the United States nuclear stockpile will be the smallest that it has been in several decades. We would also note that the United States has not produced fissile material for use in nuclear weapons for 15 years. That is a moratorium that we intend to continue, and it is one that we once again call on others to adopt pending the negotiation and entry into force of a legally binding fissile material cut-off treaty.

To our surprise, some have criticized those steps, claiming that they are insufficient, not transparent and easily reversed. I would remind such critics that, 10 years ago, the United States declared that it would place nuclear material considered in excess of defence needs under international safeguards. We have honoured that commitment with a vigorous programme that has removed huge amounts of nuclear material from weapons that we have permanently destroyed. We are proud to confirm that, since 1994, the International Atomic Energy Agency has conducted visits concerning 174 tons of such material. Frankly, the United States cannot imagine a more meaningful or transparent disarmament measure.

The United States is proud of its arms control accomplishments, including our arms control collaboration with the Russian Federation. Along with our Russian partners, we hope to proceed with a draft resolution here in the near future to demonstrate to the international community the progress that we have made in compliance with article VI. We hope that our draft resolution will command a consensus.

Ms. Lundemo (Norway): As the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to be under considerable strain, it is of paramount importance that we increase our efforts to preserve and strengthen the authority and integrity of the Treaty. The most urgent priority must be to ensure a positive and balanced outcome of the Review Conference in 2005.

Credible verification is vital in order to ensure that all States parties are meeting their NPT commitments, and thus for the Treaty's credibility. Hence, all NPT States parties must fulfil their basic obligations by signing and implementing the International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards.

Furthermore, we urge all States parties to conclude and bring into force the Model Additional Protocol. We expect that the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT will decide that the Additional Protocol is mandatory under article III of the Treaty.

The lack of universality of the NPT continues to be of great concern, and we call for renewed efforts by all States to achieve universal adherence to the Treaty. It is crucial to engage States that are not parties to the NPT in constructive non-proliferation efforts. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) reaffirms that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security and instructs Member States to do more to halt the spread of such weapons. Multilateral cooperation must be strengthened in order to support the implementation of the resolution.

Norway is firmly committed to the disarmament obligations contained in article VI of the NPT and further elaborated at the 2000 Review Conference. We reiterate that we need a balanced, step-by-step and incremental approach to nuclear disarmament. While we are lagging behind in fulfilling the 2000 obligations, we need to keep in mind that there have been considerable reductions in nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war.

The Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions is an important contribution to this process and to strategic stability. However, we need additional and irreversible cuts in nuclear arsenals, including in the stockpiles of tactical nuclear weapons.

Norway regrets that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force. We appreciate the fact that nuclear-weapon States abide by the moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests. However, such unilateral steps cannot substitute for the significance of the legally binding commitment provided by the CTBT. We urge all countries, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to ratify the CTBT without delay or additional conditions.

For the same reason, negotiations on a verifiable multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes (FMCT) are long overdue. We deeply regret that the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has blocked such negotiations, which represent the next logical step on the multilateral disarmament agenda. A credible and verifiable FMCT is essential for closing loopholes in the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In the meantime, we call upon all nuclear-weapon States to declare and reconfirm their moratorium on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices and to implement transparency measures related to production and stocks.

To conclude, the NPT is a cornerstone of our collective security. We all have a responsibility to contribute to the Treaty's vitality and to ensure a successful outcome of the upcoming Review Conference.

Mr. Heinsberg (Germany): In addition to what was said earlier by the Netherlands European Union presidency on the issue, Germany would like to make the following observations.

The threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which have become more apparent then ever, have underlined more then ever the need to safeguard and strengthen the multilateral treaty system and, in that context in particular, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The NPT has established a firm relationship between non-proliferation and disarmament and vice versa. Those two goals can only effectively be pursued jointly and not at each other's expense. It is particularly important to recall that in view of rising concerns not only regarding continuing proliferation and non-compliance with non-proliferation obligations, but also regarding the slow progress in the field of nuclear disarmament and indications of a so-called renaissance of nuclear weapons.

With the end of the cold war, new opportunities for nuclear disarmament have arisen. Those opportunities need to be seized. Germany holds the view that a nuclear-weapon-free world — that is, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons — can be achieved only by way of an incremental approach. Such an approach also underlies the 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive implementation of article VI of the NPT adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Those 13 steps remain the performance benchmark for the disarmament process.

A key element in that process is a fissile material cut-off treaty. It would strengthen both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and thus international security. Germany calls for the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the report of the special coordinator and the mandate contained therein of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now suspend the formal part of our meeting to continue our discussion in an informal format.

The meeting was suspended at 12.15 p.m. and resumed at 1 p.m.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to exercise the right of reply to address the delegation of the Netherlands, which spoke on behalf of the European Union, and the delegation of Japan. My delegation strongly rejects the allegations made by the delegation of the Netherlands, on behalf of the European Union, and by the delegation of Japan. What they claimed in their statements is not correct. They are completely biased. They are intentionally ignoring the real nature of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

The nuclear issue is the product of the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Thus, it should be resolved bilaterally between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. Because of that fact, the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States was established. However, it was destroyed through the unilateral acts of the United States. If the Agreed Framework had been implemented, the nuclear issue would have already been resolved. The unilateral United States abrogation of the Agreed Framework and that country's snowballing military threats have compelled us to immediately lift the freeze of nuclear facilities and resume their operation. These acts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have proven to be legitimate for self-defence against ever-increasing outside nuclear threats.

My delegation advises the delegation of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the European Union, and the delegation of Japan not simply to follow the super-Power blindly. Instead, they should urge the United States to scrap its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the main cause of the nuclear issue and which will be a decisive factor in the later resolution of the nuclear issue.

Lastly, before concluding, let me add some words for the delegation of Japan. I also wish to try to draw the attention of the Member States to this. Japan is the country that has military bases with nuclear weapons and is pursuing ultra-militarism in East Asia. That is a fact. I advise Japan that, before saying anything about the nuclear issue, it should dismantle all its military bases with nuclear weapons and recognize its past crimes against humanity.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.